

THE WATERMILL THEATRE – BRAND BRIEF

May 2024

Brief: To renew the visual identity for the Watermill Theatre, to include logo, typography core colours and to create brand guidelines for tone of voice and visual brand usage. The new brand will inform a redesign of the website this autumn and as such we aim to have the assets in place by the end of August 2024.

Rationale: In November 2022 we received a 100% cut to our Arts Council funding. This equates to a loss of £458k a year which is a significant loss for a 200 seat theatre to sustain.

In January 2024 we were named Theatre of the Year alongside the National Theatre in The Stage Awards and our Joint Chief Executives were celebrated in the Stage 100 alongside the leaders of 9 other regional theatres.

We have a new business plan in place to support us to generate the income and funding required to sustain the quality and ambition of our artistic and outreach programmes. This process has helped us to affirm our mission, vision and values and we are now seeking to develop a new visual identity that reflects The Watermill as a thriving, independent theatre; a small but mighty force within the country's cultural ecology.

Mission and Vision:

Our mission is to make theatre that is surprising, inventive and exciting, and to make it for everyone. We nurture and celebrate talent and creativity in our company, community and the sector, and we hold well-being, equity and sustainability at the heart of our culture.

Our vision is that by 2027 The Watermill is nationally and internationally recognised as the foremost producer of actor-musician-led work in the UK; its talent development initiatives have provided the platform for new artists to establish a successful career in the sector; inclusivity underpins every aspect of the organisation; and the work reflects and celebrates a diversity of lived perspectives.

About us:

We are a 200-seat theatre, in a converted watermill, set in beautiful gardens, with the river Lambourn running through our site. Situated in the tiny village of Bagnor, just outside Newbury, the experience of visiting the Watermill starts as you arrive at the theatre – you turn off a main road, wind down a narrow foliage-lined road, and appear over a bridge into an idyll, where you almost can't believe you are about to discover a theatre.

The intimacy of our theatre and the creativity that our space demands offer us opportunities to play with our performance space – from the slips which run the length of the sides of the theatre and over the stage, to the production sets being built onto the fabric of the building, shows staged outside, and semi-immersive shows which take over the whole site. We have a site with heritage, which we celebrate, but we are not a heritage organisation, and striking that balance is important to us, as we welcome a diverse range of audiences and participants of all ages to enjoy what we offer.

We are artistically led; we produce the majority of the productions which play in our space. A Watermill production is distinguished by its innovation and playfulness, and we specialise in actor-

musicianship, celebrating the multi-skilled company, and creating an ensemble feel to our productions. We are excited by adapting and enhancing classics as well as new writing, and audiences expect 'something different' when they come and see a Watermill production. Our work often has a future life, so our brand needs to travel with productions beyond our site and be able to have an impact on a larger scale.

The essence of a Watermill production – the innovation and playfulness, celebrating talent and focusing on community is reflected across the ambition of the whole organisation.

Community is very important to us: the staff team are passionate about the work we do, cast and creative teams live on-site during the rehearsal period and the production run creating an ensemble atmosphere, and we welcome tens of thousands of our local community to youth groups, adult groups, scratch choirs, family days – where the playful and creative spirit of our work on stage is embedded in these offerings. Customers often comment on the warm welcome and personal service they receive. We have customers who have been visiting us since we first opened as a theatre as well as welcoming many people to our theatre for the first time. We aim for everyone to feel welcome and like they have a place at our theatre.

Equity, inclusivity and environmental sustainability underpin our approach, and the nature of our site as a place where people live as well as work creates a sense of community that lends a deeper warmth to our welcome. Accessibility is an important factor of our work, and we aim to offer access services on all Watermill productions as well as running specialist groups to take part.

We have a restaurant and bar, in a tithe barn, which is owned and run by us as part of the theatre. Currently, the customer base of the restaurant is predominantly driven by attendance in the theatre, with popular pre-show dining, and one-off theatre dining events. We would like to utilise this space more when the theatre is dark, for example offering Sunday lunches, and we are available to be hired as an events space. Our food is fresh, seasonal, locally sourced and inspired by our beautiful location. Our in-house chef team create new menus to accompany each production, as well as offering a bar menu of platters and light bites. Menus are gently themed to each show, with more focus in the summer, with the semi-immersive staging of our summer musical. We stock local wines and beers and offer our own Watermill beer on tap.

Values and Principles

Whilst the change in our funding status will have an impact on the business model, the values at the heart of the organisation's work remain unchanged.

- Inclusivity & equity

The Watermill makes work and is a place for all our community. We are committed to making our buildings, productions and participation opportunities accessible and inclusive.

Attracting and nurturing talent – on and off stage, in both the artistic and administrative areas of the organisation – remains a fundamental commitment. In addition, artistic decisions and the delivery of the programme will be underpinned by a core belief that the stories we tell and the people who are part of telling them reflect and celebrate a diversity of lived experience. Our Outreach programme will continue to engage with those whose access to the arts is limited and will particularly attend to the needs of our local communities. We will continue to

prioritise accessibility in our capital planning, ensuring improvements to benefit audiences, artists and staff members across the site and buildings.

- **Creativity**

Creativity is part of the essence of The Watermill, and we believe that taking an inventive and playful approach is part of offering a joyful experience for everyone. This belief informs the way we approach stories – both new and old; how we stage a production; the approach to a project or activity designed to reach and engage participants and audiences; our communications; and our menu. We nurture and celebrate everyone's creativity and hold it as a key tenet of our work.

- **Sustainability**

Uniquely located on the banks of a river, next to a nature reserve and site of special scientific interest, our relationship to the natural world is integral to the experience of living, working or paying a visit to The Watermill. The climate crisis has a real impact on our operation eg through flooding due to rising river water. As such, we consider taking positive action to reduce our environmental impact a moral obligation driven by a business rationale. Adopting sustainable practices will be central to our operations over the next three years. Underpinned by an understanding of carbon literacy in the arts, we will develop our use of the Green Book principles and effect change in areas including production; food and drink; energy use and waste management; transport; and, in the longer term, the way we tour and transfer our work. We will be considered in making programming choices that reflect our environmental values, and in adopting technology and ways of working that minimise our impact.

- **Community**

Community and collaboration are central to The Watermill's ethos. The site and buildings are a home to artists during their time here, and permanent home to our Artistic Director's family, as well as being a place where the work is made by creatives, actors and our staff team. The combination of home and workplace creates a closer working relationship between our teams and lends itself to a sense of ensemble. We aim to recognise the personal and professional needs of everyone; for example, we support parents and carers through sensitive scheduling and flexible working for on and off stage roles.

The workplace ethos extends to our wider community of participants and audiences with a commitment to understanding their experiences and meeting their needs and expectations to ensure that they can access and enjoy every aspect of our work.

Audiences

We have loyal audiences, many of whom return to us year on year. Key productions, the summer musical and the Christmas show often form annual family traditions.

Perceived barriers to new bookers locally are that we are exclusive, for 'people in the know', already sold out, and only for an older audience. Our out-of-town location can pose an additional barrier for audiences without their own transport.

Pre-covid, only 10% of bookers were aged 45 and under and 26% of bookers were new to the Watermill annually.

Our new marketing strategy seeks to encourage loyalty whilst welcoming new bookers and diversifying our audiences.

In 2023-24, over 30% of bookers were aged 45 and under, and 40% of bookers were new to the Watermill. We saw a positive increase in bookers attending more frequently over this period too.

Our participants span all ages, we offer opportunities to take part from 18 months upwards. Our popular Youth Theatre starts from 4 up to 25 years old.

50% of our bookers come from a 24km radius of the theatre, but audiences travel a lot further, particularly for our larger-scale summer musical (where the semi-immersive staging appeals to experience seekers as well as more traditional arts bookers).

Key audience demographic groups (Audience Answer Sales Data):

- Commuterland Culture Buffs
- Dormitory Dependables
- Homes and Heritage
- Trips and Treats
- Experience Seekers

More information on these segments can be found here:

<https://evidence.audienceanswers.org/en/evidence/audience-spectrum>

The Brand – now & looking ahead

Our current visual identity looks outdated and doesn't feel reflective of the innovation or playfulness of our work (see appendix 2), or our key brand values:

- Innovative
- Playful
- Storytelling
- Welcoming
- Professional (not formal, but high quality)
- Accessible
- Community
- Ambitious
- Passionate
- Supportive

Looking ahead, we anticipate our brand to be fully realigned with our business model, brand values and ambition.

Tone of Voice

Our tone of voice is not consistent across the organisation. Historically, the tone of voice was quite formal – across website copy, customer communications, social media, marketing emails. Over the last 18 months, we have made some changes to how we create content for and write to our audiences in marketing.

We speak in everyday language, we are easy to understand and approachable, and reflect the playful nature of our work.

We are ‘us’ and ‘you’ – audiences, participants and visitors make up the ‘us’, they are part of our wider community. We are not exclusive, we welcome audiences into our space, we invite them behind the scenes (literally with theatre tours) and figuratively by sharing as much of the design and production process as we can.

We are passionate about our work – we are fans as well and we champion the talent and hard work of our team, and everyone who participates and works with us throughout the year.

Our show copy is focussed on storytelling and experience – we don’t hide behind jargon or ‘art speak’. We use vivid language and emotion to bring our work to life, but we don’t exaggerate or make overblown statements.

The language we use reflects the welcome we aim to give all audiences.

Deliverables:

- Logo: usage across web, print, digital, fundraising, development, site signage
- Typography
- Brand roll out for fundraising (membership levels, fundraising campaigns), take-part opportunities, Youth Theatre asset within main brand identity.
- Restaurant (sub)branding, menus, typography (if different from the core brand): we are looking for this to sit within the main venue branding, as an upcoming schedule of work to our restaurant and bar spaces will inform this process moving forward (outside of the scope of this timeline)
- Tone of voice formalised
- Key colours
- Brand guidelines

Project timescales:

Fri 31 May: Expression of interest and outline of work submitted

w/c 3 Jun: Branding partner shortlisting

w/c 10 June: Branding partner selection

Mid-June - end July: Brand development work

August: Brand roll-out (16 Aug deadline of final brand assets for web development team)

Please submit a response to this brief that includes:

- A consideration of The Watermill’s current brand identity
- Examples of previous relevant work
- Outline costs and timelines
- Two references

Proposals will be scored on:

- Understanding of our organisation and objectives
- Quality of portfolio
- Experience in a similar sector
- Visual design flair and creativity
- Overall quality of the response
- Cost

Proposals to be submitted to **Emma Bright** (emmabright@watermill.org.uk), Marketing Director at the Watermill by midday on Friday 31 May. If you would like to express your interest and have an informal conversation before this date, please email to arrange a suitable time.

Appendix 1

Key words from stakeholder workshops:

SETTING

- Tranquil setting
- Intimate
- Rural
- A small space that thinks big
- Beautiful location, stunning grounds, historic and sense of escape (a sense of escapism)
- Place of the theatre and building within the local community – it's treasured and people have very emotive ties to it
- Natural surroundings
- History

PRODUCTIONS & ARTISTIC APPROACH

- A regional powerhouse – we create world class theatre and have local and national reach
- Actor-musicianship
- Innovation and risk taking
- Punching above our weight / Little theatre, big ambition
- Creating beyond our size
- New writing
- Something different – a twist on a classics
- Storytelling
- High production values
- Variety of TWT's programming – presenting musicals, Shakespeare, family shows, a broad spectrum of work
- To entertain
- Representative and inclusive
- Theatre innovation
- Artistic excellence
- Regional and national reputation
- Quality and ambition of the work within a condensed, local setting
- Accessible performances
- Impact of our work
- The reach and scale and drive of a regional theatre, to have more impact than several 'London' theatres

- Doing The Lord of the Rings in a 200 seater
- Invest in talent
- Upskilling artists
- Producing /home grown / platforming talent
- Support, develop, nurture
- Supporting new creatives and performers
- The ambition post NPO

COMMUNITY & ACCESSIBILITY: AUDIENCES / PARTICIPANTS / STAFF / CAST & CREATIVES

- Family and belonging for participants
- Allowing everybody to access the arts
- A sense of belonging
- That the young people can have open conversations with us
- Community drive while nationally recognised
- Genuine community feel
- Welcoming and friendly
- Positive approach
- That we value and champion everyone's access to the arts equally
- Youth ensemble get the same treatment as the mainstage programme
- The work that the Outreach team do with young people
- Forward-thinking in terms of access, EDI, environment
- The access programme and the many groups that are run here
- Excellent work towards accessibility
- I like being able to give back properly to somewhere that's invested in and nurtured me
- Facing challenges often with enthusiasm and passion – particularly as a small theatre doing big work
- Our sense of community not just internally but within the wider community and organisations that help us touch the lives of so many who often might otherwise feel excluded
- Having seen some wonderful performances here, I feel fortunate to be able to contribute (albeit 'behind the scenes')
- Passion of staff and volunteers
- Outreach team
- The volunteers
- Heart
- Forward thinking, changing, adapting
- Proud to be part of a community that genuinely cares about what it does. That we're more than just world class theatre but also community support, training and education.
- To work in such a lovely team in such a beautiful place
- Community
- Accessibility

Appendix 2

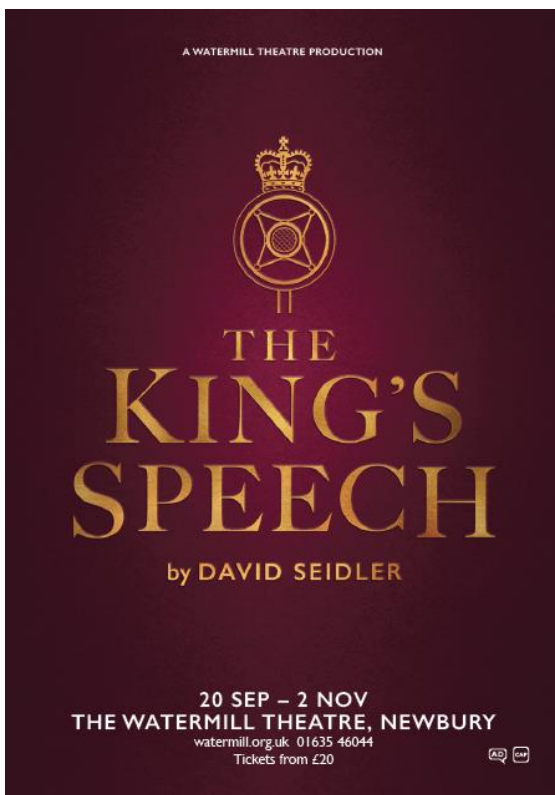
Current Branding & Examples

Logo & example departmental logo:



Venue font:

Gill Sans



Reviews:



Season announcement headers:

**2024 SEASON
ANNOUNCEMENT**

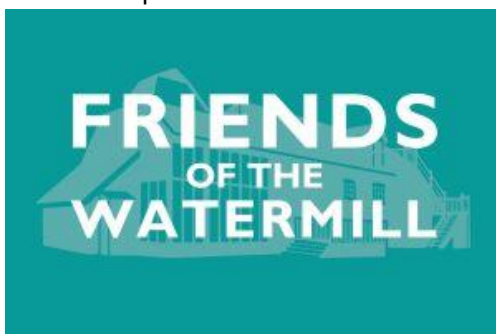
Priority on sale from 9 Feb 1pm

THE
WATERMILL
THEATRE

Dear Friend,

We are delighted to share our next season of work at The Watermill Theatre with you. It's set to be a hugely exciting year. First, The Watermill Ensemble sets a classic Shakespeare comedy in a bustling Hollywood film set, then P.T. Barnum's world of imagination and spectacle takes over the site this summer as the circus comes to town. Autumn brings an intimate new production of David Seidler's *The King's Speech*, which explores the extraordinary relationship between two men from opposite sides of the world in geography, stature and convention.

Memberships:



The restaurant:

THE WATERMILL THEATRE
RIVERSIDE BAR & RESTAURANT

WENDY & PETER PAN

23, 28, 29 and 30 MARCH 2024

Our menus are inspired by our beautiful setting in rural Berkshire, using locally sourced seasonal produce, freshly homemade in our kitchen

6oz ABERDEEN ANGUS BEEF BURGER
with chunky chips, salad garnish, and homemade coleslaw
G(wheat), E - £13.50
Add: cheese and bacon. *Mk - £1.95*

GLUTEN FREE PASTA WITH A
CHILLI, TOMATO, AND MUSHROOM SAUCE
served with grated parmesan cheese, and side salad.
Mk - £9.95

9 INCH PEPPERONI PIZZA
garnished with rocket. *G(wheat), Mk - £9.95*

CUMBERLAND SAUSAGE AND MASH
served with onion gravy and garden peas. *Mk - £10.95*

HONEY GLAZED HAM, EGG, AND CHIPS
E - £11.50

FISH AND CHIPS
beer battered cod, with chips and mushy peas
A, F, G(wheat) - £13.50

THREE BEAN CHILLI
served on a bed of basmati rice, with sour cream, tortilla chips, and
jalapenos - *£12.50*

CHICKEN CURRY
served with rice, mango chutney, and poppadoms
May contain peanuts, G(wheat) - £12.50


ETON MESS
Mk, E - £5.25

SALTED CARAMEL CHEESECAKE *Vg*
£6.50

CHOCOLATE BROWNIE
served with vanilla pod ice cream. *G(wheat), Mk - £6.50*

FRESH FRUIT SALAD
served with a raspberry coulis - *£6.25*

V Vegetarian, Vg Vegan
ALLERGENS: P peanut, N nuts, Mk milk, G gluten, E eggs, F fish, S sulphates,
C celery, M mustard, So soya, Ss sesame, Cr crustaceans, L lupin,
Mol molluscs, A alcohol.



Ingredients: water, malted barley, wheat, hops, yeast. Best before: see bottle neck.

WATERMILL

— 1967 —

GOLDEN ALE



BREWED IN
WEST BERKSHIRE

Alc 3.8% vol. 500ml e



Venue photos:

