



## ***Gear Shift* Artist Development Programme** Press Release

**The HandleBards announce their new Gear Shift artist development scheme, alongside a digital workshop programme.**

**FOR RELEASE ON MONDAY 8th MARCH 2021**

The HandleBards have announced the release of their new artist development programme, called Gear Shift, which aims to help early-career artists and producers develop their ideas, bring environmentally sustainable thinking to the forefront of their projects, and forge networks in the creative industries.

The programme is supported by Arts Council England, and will see four emerging artists work alongside the HandleBards production team to develop their skills in production, fundraising and bringing ideas to life. The programme is open to all art forms, and is particularly aimed at those who feel like they have encountered barriers to a career in the arts. As such, applicants do not necessarily have to have any professional credits - the only main criteria is that they have an environmentally-minded idea that they would like to develop.

Paul Moss, co-Artistic Director for the HandleBards, says “As we ease out of lockdown I think it’s important that we help to nurture up and coming talent, and give them the support they need, just as we were supported when we started our own company eight years ago. Now more than ever, artists need to be aware of creating work in a way that is conscious of the environment and community driven. With Gear Shift we are aiming to support the next generation of artistic change makers.”

The announcement comes alongside the release of a new digital workshop series and podcast, all encompassed within the company’s Arts Council England funded digital programme. The workshop series, entitled Backstage with the Bards, involves live weekly zoom workshops and play readings, panel discussions with industry leaders including David Lan and Robert Hastie, along with a YouTube series of short Shakespeare plays for young people. The podcast, The Bard With Bill, will see actor William Ross-Fawcett lead a fortnightly discussions, dissecting Shakespeare’s plays.

For more details about the Gear Shift programme, please visit [www.handlebards.com/jobs-and-opportunities](http://www.handlebards.com/jobs-and-opportunities). The programme is open for applications until midday on the 31st March.

**ENDS**

### **EDITOR’S NOTES**

#### **Contact Details**

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#### **Image**

An image for publication is available here: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/biuvnr1h70o03r3/DSC\\_0416.jpg?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/biuvnr1h70o03r3/DSC_0416.jpg?dl=0)

Credit: Tom Dixon

Please contact Paul Moss for more images if necessary.

### **About The HandleBards**

The HandleBards began from a small seed of an idea - Shakespeare on bicycles - with limited resources and trailer-loads of passion. Over the last 8 years we have grown to become an award winning internationally renowned theatre company, touring 14 Shakespeare productions to 15 countries across 5 continents and performing to over 30,000 people a year. We have been consistently recognised for our sustainability efforts, having been awarded the Edinburgh Fringe Sustainable Practice Award in 2014, nominated for The Stage Sustainability Award in 2017, and recently being invited to the Creative Climate Convening discussions in advance of COP26, facilitated by Julie's Bicycle. In 2020 we became a registered charity, solidifying our commitment to education and sustainability in the arts.

### **About Gear Shift**

We're looking for the next generation of creative change-makers to join our new artist development programme - Gear Shift.

Each Gear Shift participant will receive 10 hours of bespoke mentorship, development and shadowing sessions from Tom Dixon and Paul Moss, the founding producers of the HandleBards, working to increase the participant's skillset in production, fundraising, and the art of bringing a creative project to life.

As well as the mentorship and advice, the programme will feature masterclass sessions from industry leaders, giving you access to expert advice and guidance across the sector and beyond.

There are four spots on this year's inaugural Gear Shift programme, which will take place from April to October 2021. In order to apply, you don't necessarily need to have any professional credits, but we're looking for people with a drive to bring a creative idea to life and build environmental sustainability into the heart of their work. You might be a visual artist, a director, an actor, a writer, a producer, a magician, a DJ, or a combination of things - we're looking for creative people across all art forms, with an environmentally-minded idea and an appetite to make stuff happen. We're particularly interested in hearing from people from a variety/diverse of backgrounds, including experience in non arts related fields, and those who feel they've encountered barriers to a career in the arts and want to bring their ideas and stories to fruition.

To apply please visit [www.handlebards.com](http://www.handlebards.com) and fill out our short application form by midday on 31st March. We will be hosting a short webinar on 16th March at 3pm to talk through the programme and the application process and answer any questions you might have, details of which are on our website.

Gear Shift is supported by Arts Council England.

### **About Backstage with the Bards**

Backstage with the Bards is an Arts Council England funded programme of workshops and digital activity, building on the outreach and education work of the HandleBards in 2020. The programme features the following strands:

- **The Bard with Bill podcast** featuring actor William Ross-Fawcett leading a discussion around some of Shakespeare's most famous plays. The podcast will begin as a limited six-episode series, looking at Romeo & Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It, The Tempest, Twelfth Night and Macbeth. The Bard with Bill is developed from a live zoom series run by the actor in 2020 and 2021.

- **A weekly live workshop series** on zoom, comprising play readings, acting masterclasses, and panel discussions with industry leaders including David Lan and Robert Hastie.

- **A series of YouTube workshops** released in the Easter holidays, encouraging young people to engage with Shakespeare, acting techniques, design and puppetry.