

Annual Review

2025-2026



OPEN CLASP
THEATRE
COMPANY
♀



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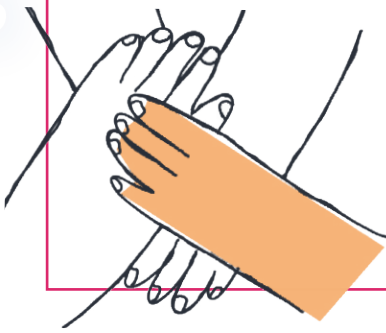
Open Clasp is a feminist theatre company based in the North East which co-creates theatre with communities of women and girls that calls for gender justice and systemic change.

Our mission is to create theatre which ignites activism and places social, political, and personal change at its heart- changing the world one play at a time.

By doing this, we aim to achieve our vision of gender justice for women and girls.

We do this by creating spaces for women, inclusive of trans women and non-binary individuals, who are often furthest from the arts and face inequalities in our society, to be creative, share and discuss. Women gather as experts in their lived experiences to highlight the issues and what needs to change. By sharing the injustices of women and girls, we seek to find the justice

Our high quality theatre influences opinions, supports academic research and impacts policy.



RUPTURE

In a split-second decision, Destiny finds herself on the prison roof. She can see fireworks. She hopes her kids can see them too. This is the story of one woman who takes back control. Rupture is a compelling one-woman show inspired by the real-life experiences of mothers in prison.

Rupture toured 12 venues across England and Ireland, engaging over 550 people in prisons, universities, schools and conferences through screenings and post-show panel discussions supported by experts.

Rupture was screened online in partnership with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Insights. 225 professionals from the Ministry of Justice and public registered for the event, including representatives from the HMPPS Women's Group.

"Very powerful piece of theatre. Really gave me an insight into the issue and what needs to change. I will take this away with me and think about it for a long time."

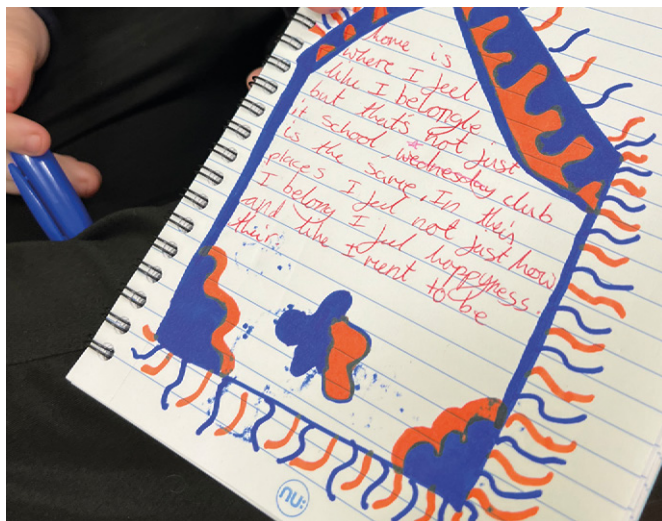
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Belonging Project

Through autumn we were invited to facilitate creative writing workshops with those attending West End Women and Girls Centre.

Together, we shared stories and explored what it means to belong. Women and girls wrote about friendship, feminism, freedom and finding their place. The centre is full of talent, creativity, and care.



This project brought together two organisations sharing a building and values, Open Clasp and West End Women and Girls Centre — to celebrate belonging, community and creativity. It was a powerful reminder of what can happen when women come together: changing the world, one creative writing project at a time.

Catrina McHugh, Artistic Director, Open Clasp

Us Too Training

"I really enjoyed the session; it was very impactful. Playing in the role of the other services and getting an understanding of other viewpoints. I feel like joining minds and lived experiences is so important to gives survivor the best support."

Us Too: Alisha's Story is a compelling film co-created with women from the #UsToo group in Devon and Cornwall. This powerful story focused on the experiences of women with learning disabilities and/or autism reporting rape and assault, challenges misconceptions and highlights the strength of resilience and the pursuit of justice. When asked what outcome they wanted, they answered: To be heard.

In March 2026 we ran 6 training sessions in Newcastle and Durham, training 77 professionals working in the sector and Police using the Us Too film. 80% of participants left feeling more informed and confident in supporting women with learning disabilities and/or autism.

Elswick Project- Future

In 2028, Open Clasp will celebrate our 30th Anniversary.

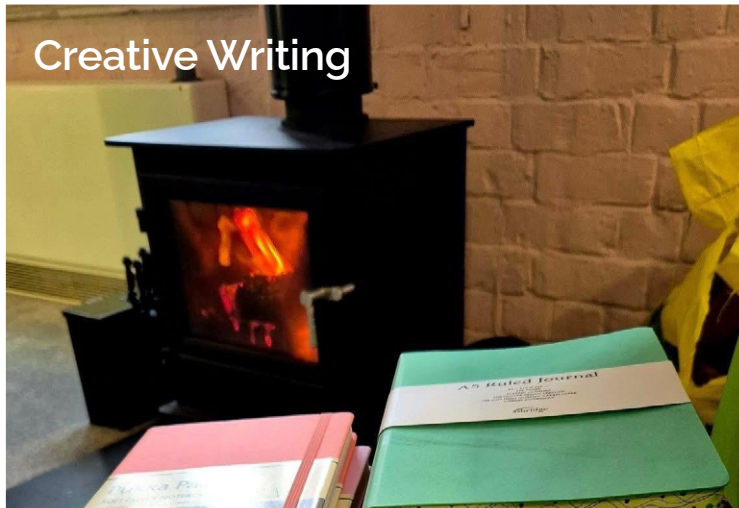
To coincide with our 30th anniversary, we will be working over the next two-years to co-create a new piece of theatre with women and girls from West End Women & Girls Centre. Our vision is that this piece of theatre is a call for action for the rights of working-class women and girls, women from all over the world, and made in Elswick.

Our ambition is to take our co-creation model even further. Our aim is for the women we work with to have the opportunity to be embedded in all elements of the play, where they can be the actor, writer and theatre maker. This piece of theatre will ask audiences to step into the shows of the women and girls, to have empathy and to take action.

This will be one of our most ambitious projects to date.



Creative Writing



10 women from West End Women and Girls Centre and Open Clasp's cohort of Gold Star Members met in the centre's library, learning and developing their creative writing skills. We created a space where women could write about what it means to be safe, the city they live in and belonging. Lead by Artistic Director, Catrina with guests Christina Berriman Dawson, Jessica Johnson and Narisha Lawson, the women enjoyed the therapeutic nature of writing and discovering their talent.

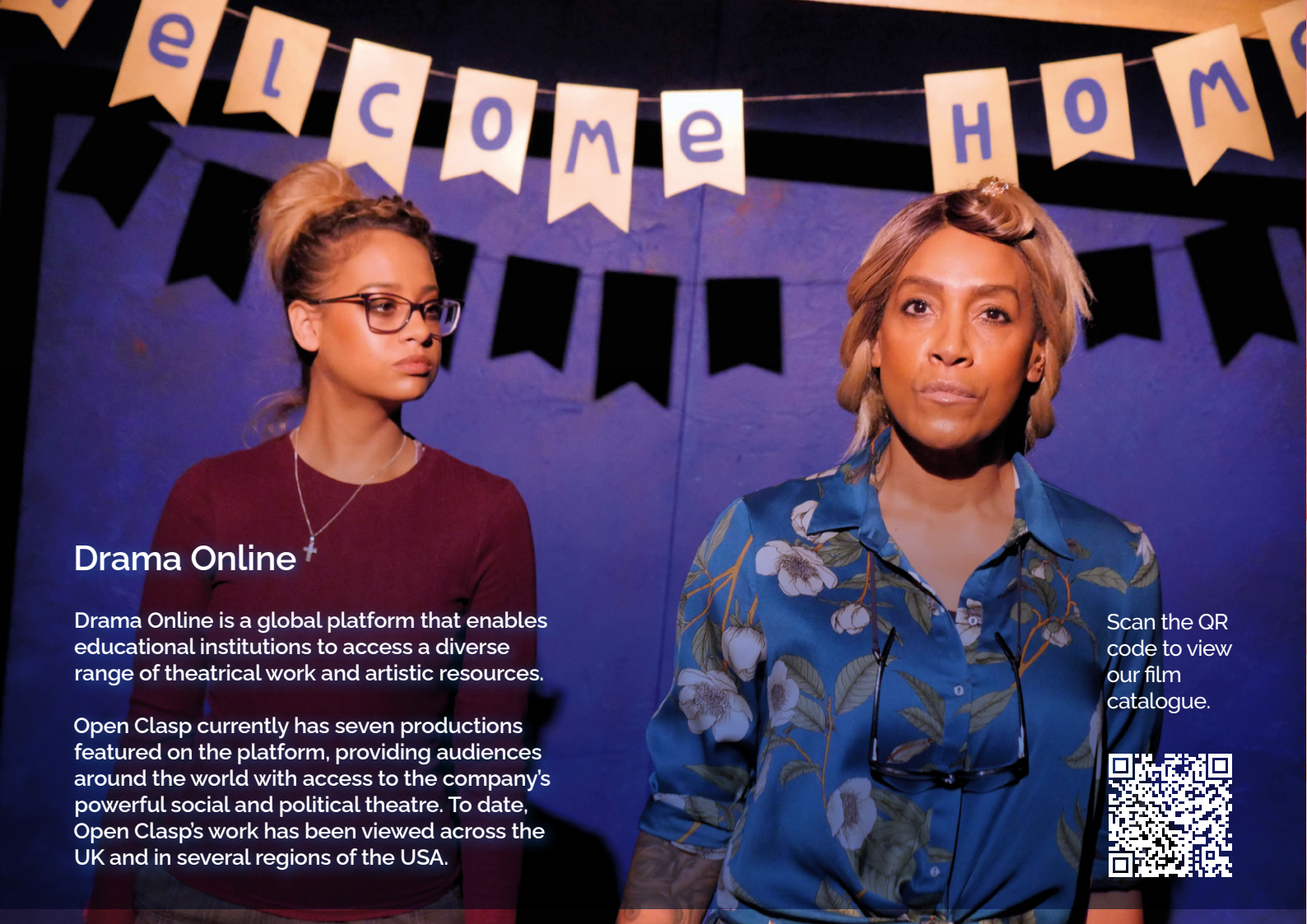
"I feel able to write and there is no right or wrong way. I've really enjoyed all the different ways you can explore writing"



Scan the QR code to sign up for our newsletter to receive updates on events and new show developments.

Stay updated and sign up for newsletter here: openclasp.org.uk/signup



A photograph of two women standing in front of a blue backdrop. Above them is a string of white banners with blue letters that read 'WELCOME HOME'. The woman on the left is wearing a maroon long-sleeved shirt, glasses, and a necklace with a cross pendant. The woman on the right is wearing a blue floral patterned shirt and has glasses hanging from her neckline. Both women have their hair styled in buns.

Drama Online

Drama Online is a global platform that enables educational institutions to access a diverse range of theatrical work and artistic resources.

Open Clasp currently has seven productions featured on the platform, providing audiences around the world with access to the company's powerful social and political theatre. To date, Open Clasp's work has been viewed across the UK and in several regions of the USA.

Scan the QR code to view our film catalogue.





Workforce Development Programme

Open Clasp delivered its workforce development programme to 12 women. These ranged from women from the local community to artists, PhD students and theatre makers. They were trained in Open Clasp's methodology, and learnt the skills and techniques needed to be a facilitator. The final step of this programme will take place in September 2026 where they will be trained in delivering the Rattlesnake training on behalf of Open Clasp.

"I really enjoyed working as a team to expand our thinking, creating ideas, problem solving"

Mycelial/ Lesvos/Athens

Mycelial continued to reach new audiences in 2025. A special screening in Lesvos, Greece, introduced the film to international communities engaged in conversations about sex workers' rights, reflecting the growing cross-border resonance of its themes.

In August, **Mycelial** was screened in Glasgow as part of the Scotland4Decrim campaign, with Artistic Director Catrina McHugh contributing to the post-show panel. This event proved timely: later in the year, MSPs voted against adopting the Nordic model in Scotland, a significant win for the protection of sex workers' rights.

"We found it extremely powerful. We appreciated that it centred activism and human rights, didn't portray sex workers only as victims. Instead, it exposed the injustice and stigma they face while giving space to their strength, resilience, and agency. It was deeply empowering to see these stories told in a way that challenged stereotypes and highlighted the fight for dignity and justice. We felt moved, inspired, and reminded of how important it is to keep these conversations alive."

Red Umbrella Athens

We would like to thank all our funders and donors, and everyone who has supported the company this year including:

**Arts Council England, Comic Relief,
Community Foundation North East,
Newcastle City Council, Sir James Knott
Trust, Sir Halley Stewart Trust, Network
for Social Change, Badur Foundation,
Shears Foundation**



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to our work to help us co-create
performances with women and girls.

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