

Mayflower

WE'RE B-B-BOPPING,
AND HOPPING TO THE
B-BEAT OF THIS SONG
BASS IS DROPPING,
BONNETS POPPING
WE'RE HERE
TIGHT LONG

IMPACT REPORT

Mayflower Summer Youth Project 2025
The Last Rose of Summer

Introduction



***The Last Rose of Summer* was a brand new one-act musical inspired by Jane Austen's life and her connection to Southampton.**

It was produced in 2025 by Mayflower as a Mayflower Made Production and performed by young people aged from 11 to 25. The musical was created by the writing team, Daisy Chute and Rebecca Brewer who were the recipients of the 2024 Cameron Mackintosh Resident Writers placement with Mayflower Studios. An all-female creative team brought the show to life, including choreography from partners, Birmingham Royal Ballet and Matthew Bourne's New Adventures.

Organisational Impact

At Mayflower we take the difference that we make seriously, seeking to understand and amplify our cultural and social impact. *The Last Rose of Summer* was a unique project for us; a youth project focused on new work giving an opportunity to demonstrate impact across our stages, our communities and venues - uniting ambitions and providing inspiring and transformative experiences for audiences, freelancers and young people. We experimented with methods of capturing impact and used:

- Indigo Share – audience feedback
- Impact and Insight Toolkit – participant and parent feedback
- Most Significant Change interviews
- University College London (UCL) Creative Wellbeing Measures
- Dressing room prompts for cast responses
- Austen-themed writing desk for audience responses – 'letters to the cast'
- QR code for surveys displayed in the building with different asks appealing to different mindsets
- Staff front-of-house to encourage people to share thoughts using the writing desk, the survey and recorded vox pops
- Bespoke pre and post visit emails sharing the story of the project, the charitable status/focus on young people and encouraging feedback.

Ambitions at the inception of *The Last Rose of Summer* were:

- To create a production that was creatively exciting; a new piece of work with potential to develop
- To foster a sense of collaboration and experimentation in the rehearsal process
- To increase the wellbeing of the young cast; building confidence, connection and industry know-how
- To imbue the process and the outcome with Mayflower's sense of welcome and inclusion for all
- To maintain our commitment to achieving Carbon Zero by 2050; producing theatre in a manner that is environmentally responsible

This report demonstrates how we made an impact through achieving these ambitions and how we are committed to ensuring that the positive impacts of *The Last Rose of Summer* continue through other youth projects, presented programme and Mayflower Made Productions.



Community

Our cast was comprised of young people from 11 to 25

173 applied

87 seen at auditions

55 selected as cast members

32 were new to Mayflower (58.2%)

11 places were subsidised (20% of total cast)



An inspired, valued and connected community

The Last Rose of Summer was one of Mayflower's flagship Summer Youth Projects, designed to give young people the chance to showcase their best selves while experiencing a positive and transformative experience. The success of our youth projects is measured not only by the quality of the performance but by the impact on participants' wellbeing.

Measuring Wellbeing

Increases in the wellbeing of the young people involved with *The Last Rose of Summer* were captured using:

- UCL Creative Measures of Wellbeing
- Traditional post-event surveys
- Themed creative prompts

Results from the UCL Measures of Wellbeing show the cast entering the process as a highly energised and positive group. We therefore saw little difference to the end results bar some slight increases in positivity, communication and connection. These increases are best demonstrated through the post-event surveys and the qualitative comments from cast where themes around happiness, enjoyment, confidence and friendship were amplified:

90%
of the cast rated their
experience as 'excellent'

I feel as though my confidence has grown so much. Being on stage makes me feel so free and happy

I'm more positive and happier. I'm the me that most people don't often get to see often

Everyone was so lovely and super supportive of each other, and I have definitely made friends for life

Inclusion & Belonging

Alongside providing an enjoyable experience that nurtured people's wellbeing, the project placed a strong emphasis on inclusion. Eleven of the places were subsidised, removing financial barriers. Disabled cast members were fully supported, we presented BSL-interpreted performances, and creative captioning was integrated into the set design.

The genuine sense of belonging and welcome was captured using the Culture Counts Toolkit. 100% of respondents strongly agreed with the statements:

I felt like I could be myself

It made me feel welcome and included

Further feedback from cast members and families bring these results to life:

I've felt part of a big family

The most fun, valuable and inclusive experience

I particularly liked how inclusive the entire show has been for people of all abilities, genders, ages and personalities



Pathways into the industry

Eight young people from *Last Rose of Summer* went on to join the 2025 Christmas Youth Project, including one younger sibling of a cast member. This progression demonstrates the pathways available through Mayflower's activities – routes that may, for some, lead into professions within the theatre industry. Tracking these participants over a number of years

as part of longitudinal studies will determine whether we are achieving our aim of building a thriving ecology of future theatre-makers through our youth projects. What we do know is that we are laying a strong foundation and that having the next step to offer is of utmost importance to harness the motivation and build the skill and commitment required to enter the industry.

“ This entire show has been life-changing in every way ”

Wider Impact

Feedback from families was overwhelmingly positive. 100% of parents surveyed felt their young people would like to be involved again with a Mayflower project in the future, and all rated the experience as excellent.

Beyond the immediate benefits, *The Last Rose of Summer* revealed the surprising and often hidden impacts on families of our youth projects. Audience members were invited to write letters to the cast, and among the many lovely messages, one stood out:

“Thank you for making my older sister so happy.”

This simple note captured the wider ripple effect of the project - how participatory experiences not only transform the young people involved but also affect those around them. For future projects we will be pulling on this thread and explicitly asking families about the impact on them of their young people being involved. We hope this will start to uncover some wider, and perhaps previously unconsidered impacts, of our activity.

Parents were also asked to share their reflections on the most valuable aspects of the youth projects on their young people:

“We very much appreciated the open conversation about how this particular project could help to develop his skills — as a performer but also in other creative directions”

“It boosted her confidence immensely and she did not stop smiling whilst on stage. This showed us this is where she sees herself in the future”

Together, these voices highlight how Mayflower's youth projects build confidence, develop skills, and create lasting joy — not only for participants but, as we are starting to see, for their families and communities too.



Stages

21 freelancers employed

2 development weeks

2 rehearsal weeks

3 shows



A relevant, thriving cultural sector

The Creative Team

The Last Rose of Summer was a new piece of work and conceived to be part of the *Jane Austen 250* celebrations, positioning Mayflower Studios within a nationwide celebration of Jane Austen's life and works.

Jane Austen's own situation as a creative woman in a world made for men was explored on stage and practically embodied through a predominantly all-female creative team. This deliberate commitment to better female representation in creative leadership directly reflects Mayflower's commitment to inclusivity and female-led stories. It was an approach recognised and celebrated by the creative team:

"It was a really positive and inspirational experience"

"It was the first time I have worked in an all-female team, and I hope to do it again"

"It was inspiring to be around so many talented and experienced women"

“

It was a place of yes and exploration rather than no and barriers

”

Freelance Director,
The Last Rose of Summer

100% of the creative team that responded to our survey said that it was likely or very likely that, if asked, they would want to work on future Mayflower Productions.

This approach not only honoured Austen's legacy but also demonstrated how intentional representation can inspire creative professionals and foster positive working dynamics.

Currently a new professional work is being explored, emerging directly from the themes and creative relationships established through *The Last Rose of Summer*. This evolution reflects the enthusiasm and trust that sector peers have in Mayflower Made Productions and this project.



The Audience

The performances not only attracted a good number of audiences to new work but, crucially, a high number of new audience members to Mayflower. Survey results suggest that this is a combination of cast's family and friends attending, a strong interest in the theme and a curiosity to 'try out' new work.

Significantly, *The Last Rose of Summer* generated engaged and informed audiences.

- We had a higher-than-average take-up for the post-event survey
- Thoughtful letters from audience members were written to the cast
- 100% of those surveyed were aware that Mayflower is a charity (which is an unusually high number for us)
- Plenty of willing volunteers for short video interviews.

We also saw an uplift in engagement across our social media channels for *The Last Rose of Summer* content, with a higher-than-average level of likes, views and click-throughs to content. This suggests that there was curiosity and interest in the piece – perhaps as a new piece of work, with the local link or with the Jane Austen theme.

That 90% of people surveyed gave the show 5 stars demonstrates the level of happy and engaged audiences. This is further supported through comments expressing enjoyment about the theme, the messages, the talent and the embedded access elements:

“ ***I loved every moment of it - fabulous writing and staging, music and performance. The whole show was so uplifting and so relevant to young people today*** ”

“ ***We liked the inclusive nature of the performance*** ”



1165

attendees across four shows

65%

of audience were first-time attendees to Mayflower Studios

90%

gave the performance 5 stars

Accessibility

At Mayflower, we recognise that no work can be truly relevant if barriers prevent people from experiencing it.

The Last Rose of Summer demonstrated what the cultural sector can look like when accessibility is a central consideration. 10% of the *The Last Rose of Summer* audience identified themselves as having an access need. This is an expected average for our Studios audiences.

Significantly, however, all audience members experienced the integrated access elements and what really stood out in the comments were the spontaneous, enthusiastic and numerous responses for these elements:

The lady doing the signing was enchanting

The sign language lady was brilliant and blended in with the performance

I loved the words projected like a book

Having such a supportive, positive team made such a difference. They helped me believe I could do it

Cast member

We believe everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy an inspiring experience with us — whether creating, participating, or visiting. Our surveys and the qualitative feedback show that when removing barriers to access is not selective but universal, it creates a visible welcome and shared sense of belonging for all.

Mayflower Made Productions will remain committed to authentic inclusion. The approaches that underpinned the success of *The Last Rose of Summer* — such as creative exploration, mutual support, and the removal of barriers — leave lasting impacts. These are impacts that will influence the young cast in their next steps in the industry, and will shape the way we create inspiring, accessible experiences in all our future productions.



Venues

77%

of materials used in the production were pre-used – borrowed, second-hand, or sourced from our own stores. This included props, costumes, sets, and scenery.

94%

of materials will either be recycled or returned to our stores to be repurposed for future productions.

Sustainable, creative spaces for future generations

Mayflower Youth projects are focused on providing opportunities that inspire the next generation of theatre-makers and theatre-goers. As part of this commitment, we want to ensure that we are maintaining the physical spaces that comprise our venues so that future generations benefit from our wonderful and varied creative spaces. This is about ensuring spaces are safe and fit for purpose practically and that they remain, first and foremost, performance spaces. It is also about recognising Mayflower's part in taking responsibility for the climate emergency and reducing our environmental impact where possible. We have an overall aim of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050.

We use the Theatre Green Book as a framework to hold ourselves accountable and to embed sustainability across all our operations and productions. Recognised as the leading theatre sustainability standard, the Theatre Green Book grades productions at Basic, Intermediate, or Advanced levels according to how well they meet sustainability targets.

For *The Last Rose of Summer*, we comfortably achieved Basic Level overall and are already progressing towards Intermediate. In several areas, our results exceeded the thresholds required for Advanced.

Environmental sustainability is embedded into technical plans, ensuring equipment is well-maintained and has a long life; making sound economic sense as well as supporting our carbon-cutting goals. For *The Last Rose of Summer*, we also provided an information pack of in-house and local resources to the creative team and have delivered climate literacy training to key team members.

Our pride as custodians of our creative spaces is visible in our venues and recognised by our audiences. 80% of survey respondents agreed that Mayflower ***“is demonstrating a clear commitment to environmental responsibility.”*** Others highlighted the quality of our public facilities and spaces, noting how these contribute to a positive visitor experience.

We will continue to combine practical environmental action with audience engagement, not only reducing our environmental footprint using Theatre Green Book as our blueprint, but also helping to shape a theatre culture where responsibility and creativity go hand in hand.

“ **We particularly enjoyed the attention to detail of the displays in the bar area and immersive settings** ”

Audience member,
The Last Rose of Summer



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