

Chesil Street, Winchester SO23 0HU

NEWS RELEASE

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*TAKETEN* CHESIL THEATRE NEW WRITING FESTIVAL WINS SUPPORT

FROM AWARD-WINNING WRITER AND DIRECTOR JESSICA SWAYLE

Chesil Theatre Winchester’s new writing festival *TakeTen* has received the backing of writer, director and film maker Jessica Swayle, best known to theatregoers for her Olivier Award-winning comedy *Nell Gwynn,* which starred Gemma Arterton as the eponymous heroine.

Jessica’s endorsement of Chesil Theatre’s commitment to encouraging aspiring writers follows previous sponsorship for the festival from Sir Ian McKellen and Sir Kenneth Branagh.

Recognising that writing can sometimes be joyful but at other times tough, Jessica’s personal message to Chesil Theatre and all the entrants to *TakeTen* includes:

“Kudos to every one of you who’s had the courage to pick up a pen (or open a word document) and write because it is no easy task. To construct a scenario, a world, people from dust and make them whole, make them speak, takes time and commitment.

And yet the rewards can be glorious. There is little that makes me feel more alive than sitting quietly in the back of the theatre and hearing an audience laugh or gasp when an actor breathes life into a character who, not long ago, was a mere kernel of an idea in my head. To create, to imagine and to share is a wonderful thing. And it’s a great privilege.”

With this year’s theme ‘Snakes and Ladders’, Chesil Theatre’s *TakeTen* encourages writers to enter the competition for plays lasting just 10 minutes. The deadline for submissions is Friday 2nd June 2023. The top ten plays will then be chosen by an independent panel of professional theatre practitioners and given their première in February 2024.

Chesil Theatre Chairman Stephanie Danby said:

“We have been organising a national new writing festival regularly since 2008 and the range in interpretations of the theme never fail to impress and astonish us. We’re receiving plays from all four countries in the UK, from members of writing circles and theatre groups, university students, previous entrants and from those trying for the first time. As Jessica said ‘By writing for the theatre you share your stories with the wider world. And we can’t wait to hear them.’ Here at the Chesil Theatre we’re excited to offer the opportunity for new works to be performed on stage for the first time.”

Details of the *TakeTen* Chesil Theatre New Writing Festival are available from [www.chesiltheatre.org.uk](http://www.chesiltheatre.org.uk) including the entry criteria and submission form.

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Editor’s Notes

The attached image of Jessica Swayle is provided repro-free for editorial use. Please credit rights holder Michael Warley.

About Chesil Theatre

Chesil Theatre (Winchester Dramatic Society) is based in the heart of Winchester, presenting up to eight productions a year, ranging from traditional classics to contemporary works. Chesil Theatre also encourages new writing through its biennial festival *TakeTen*, runs drama workshops, outreach community projects and readings, two lively youth theatre groups and offers stagecraft and technical training. The Company has been performing for over 150 years.

Since 1966 Chesil Theatre has been the Society’s permanent home - a former 12th-century church in Chesil Street, Winchester. This medieval building provides an intimate 75-seat studio-style theatre and versatile performance space.

About Jessica Swayle

Jessica Swayle studied drama at the University of Exeter and completed her training as a director at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. In 2006 she set up Red Handed Theatre Company to perform new works and revive lost classics. Her first play *Blue Stockings* premiered at Shakespeare’s Globe in 2013. *Nell Gwynn* won the Olivier Award for Best New Comedy in 2016. She writes for the stage, television and film. In 2020 she wrote and directed her first full-length screenplay *Summerland* and in 2022 directed two episodes of *Ten Percent* for Amazon Prime based on the hit French series *Call My Agent.*