



5 at 50 – Stage One's 50th Anniversary Award Scheme

2026 will see Stage One celebrate 50 years of training and supporting UK theatre producers.

Established in 1976, as the Theatre Investment Fund, Stage One's renowned development programme comprises; trainee producer placements, bursaries, workshops, masterclasses, mentoring and investment schemes.

The programme is intrinsically linked with industry, providing unparalleled opportunities to gain knowledge, hands-on experience and funding, with a focus on entrepreneurship and representation in the industry. Stage One's work is vital to the future sustainability of UK theatre.

Award Guidelines

To mark the anniversary, we are looking to invest in 5 exceptional mid-career producers, who we would like to partner with, looking to take the next step in their career. We want to give sustained and practical support for 5 producers over 2026 and beyond to allow them to make that next step in commercial producing.

The award is designed to accelerate and support producers through their first large scale commercial production.

If you are aiming to lead produce or co-produce on your first West End or large-scale tour in 2026/2027, Stage One can provide financial and practical assistance to fulfil this aim and support your overall development as a Producer. Those with previous associate producer credits in west end or commercial tours are eligible to apply.

How will it work?

The programme will comprise of 3 parts:

1. **Mentoring** – You will be matched with an industry leading producer for a minimum of 12 months, who has committed to supporting your career development. They will be able to offer you advice and guidance, be a sounding board and open their network to you.
2. **Financial Award** – Similar to Stage One's bursary programme, you will be awarded £20,000 to use for your own personal development. This could be used (but not limited) on the following:

- To cover living expenses such as rent or bills to allow you to dedicate more time to producing
 - Accountants or legal fees associated with projects or setting up a business
 - Hardware or equipment
 - Training and development costs
3. **Investment** – Stage One are established investors in commercial productions across the UK. Through the relationship with your mentor, or through other networks, the hope is that as a producer you will be ready to raise, as a co-producer, on a West End or commercial touring production with projects starting development over the next 24 months. Stage One will offer you £50,000 match funding based on you successfully raising. The production must meet Stage One's Investment Guidelines to be eligible for any investment.

Who are we looking to support?

We want to support those Producers who are ready to lead produce or co-produce in the West End or on a large-scale touring production.

We expect you to be able to demonstrate a successful track record in off West End, regional or Fringe producing, including raising commercial investment for projects and showing clear financial acumen. Those with associate producer credits in west end or commercial tours are eligible to apply, however if you have been a lead or co-lead producer on a west end or commercial tour, your application will not be considered.

Applicants will also need to demonstrate how the mentoring and award would develop their career.

We believe that everyone has the right to see themselves and their stories being represented in theatre. The role of a theatre producer is integral to seeing a range of truthful and authentic stories being told. We actively welcome applications from those who feel they are underrepresented in the industry, and we will prioritise these applicants. We welcome applications from producers based across the UK.

Qualifying Criteria

- Applicants must have a clear track record in successfully producing at least one of the following: Off West End, mid-scale nationally and regional touring level, associate producer (West End or large scale tour)
- Applicants must be over the age of 18. There is no upper age limit for Stage One support
- Applicants must be UK-based and intend for the work to be produced in the UK.
- Applicants must have the right to work in the UK
- When established, the production must meet Stage One's [Investment Guidelines](#).

You are **not** eligible to apply if:

- You are an established producer with West End lead/co producer credits and significant experience or contacts within the industry
- You are applying as a co-producing duo or partnership; this is an individual award
- You cannot show previous theatre producing experience

Person Specification:

Skills & Knowledge:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the theatre-making process from development through to production
- Have strong organisational, communication, and negotiation skills
- Be confident and comfortable in networking and building relationships with creatives, investors, and producing partners
- Willingness to work collaboratively
- Willingness to work alongside and learn from a senior producer
- Demonstrate ambition and entrepreneurial qualities needed to raise investment in commercial theatre

Experience

- Has demonstrable previous experience successfully producing at least one of the following: Off West End, mid-scale nationally and regional touring level, associate producer (West End or large-scale tour)
- Has raised small-scale investment or managed a project budget
- May have experience in arts fundraising, programming, marketing, or general management, with transferable producing skills

If you have any further questions about your eligibility or how the process works, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us, at enquiries@stageone.uk.com or by calling 0207 5576737.

Applications for Stage One's 5 at 50 programme will **open on Monday 12th January** and close at **12 noon** on **Monday 2nd February**. Interviews for those shortlisted will take place w/c 9th February 2026.

We will be hosting a 5 at 50 Clinic on **Monday 19th January from 1-2pm on Zoom**. If you are planning on applying, we strongly encourage you to attend this session. This will be an opportunity to ask any questions about the programme and what you can apply for directly to our Chief Executive, Joseph Smith. **Please email enquiries@stageone.uk.com to register your interest.**