

PENTABUS ANNOUNCE ASSOCIATE ARTISTS FOR 2025

- Four new and one returning Associate Artists will champion the company's work and support it in finding new talent.
- The Associate Artists will work closely with Pentabus Artistic Director Elle While, putting artists at the heart of the organisation.



Clockwise from top left: Katie Elin-Salt, Sophie Ellerby, Naeem Hayat, Tom Powell, and Anoushka Warden.

Pentabus today announces their Associate Artists for 2025. They are actor and writer [Katie Elin-Salt](#) (*Celebrated Virgins*), writer [Sophie Ellerby](#) (*LIT*), actor and director [Naeem Hayat](#) (*Nora: A Doll's House*), and writer [Tom Powell](#) (*The Silence and the Noise*). They join writer [Anoushka Warden](#) (*My Mum's A Tw*t*), who returns for a third year as an Associate Artist.

The Associates represent a rich and diverse selection of skills and perspectives, and each builds on an existing relationship with Pentabus, the nation's rural theatre company.

Katie Elin-Salt has previously facilitated and mentored the Pentabus Local Young Writers group. Sophie Ellerby is a former Clive Richards Foundation Writer-in-Residence, spending 2018 with the company. Naeem Hayat directed *SEEN*, the 2024 Local Young Writers showcase. Tom Powell is also a former CRF Writer-in-Residence, and Pentabus co-produced a digital version of *The Silence and the Noise* with Rural Media, which won

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Best Film at the Broadstairs International Film Festival and Best Online Production at the Off West End Awards. Anoushka Warden's digital play *Toed* was produced by Pentabus.

The Associates will work throughout the year to support Pentabus' artistic programme, champion the company's work, and help it find exciting new talent.

They will join Pentabus in a year when they host their first Jerwood Writer-in-Residence, the Olivier-nominated Liv Hennessey (*Vardy v Rooney: The Wagatha Christie Trial*), and tour [*Driftwood*](#), written by former Writer-in-Residence Tim Foley, on a UK tour in an upscaled production after a successful rural tour in 2023 (co-produced with ThickSkin). Pentabus recently celebrated their 50th anniversary and toured *Make Good: The Post Office Musical*, which played sold-out dates across the country (co-produced with New Perspectives).

Elle While, Artistic Director of Pentabus, said, *"It is an honour to welcome these exceptional artists and humans to be part of the creative hive-mind of Pentabus. We are so grateful to them for the care and invaluable contributions they have all already made to the company and look forward to their inquisitive and ambitious contributions helping to shape the future output and opportunities from our small but mighty organisation."*

Katie Elin-Salt said, *"I'm delighted to have been asked to be an Associate for Pentabus. As someone from a working-class background, who grew up with limited access to theatre and opportunities within the arts, I know first-hand the value of theatre and organisations like Pentabus. I'm hugely inspired by companies and artists who reach beyond just what is expected of them and their audiences - and I'm very excited about finding and nurturing stories and talents for and from a wider scope of experiences and perspectives."*

Sophie Ellerby said, *"After a year as Writer-In-Residence back in 2018, it's an honour to be asked to return to Pentabus as an Associate Artist. Investment in rural arts and culture is more important now than ever before, as a tool to spark discussion and impact positive change. I look forward to contributing to the important work the company does in bringing some of the best Rural Theatre to the UK."*

Naeem Hayat said, *"I'm thrilled to be working with the brilliant team at Pentabus. It feels a real privilege and important to continue working alongside a company that so tirelessly keeps story and community at its heart."*

Tom Powell said, *"From being a Clive Richards Foundation Writer-in-Residence in 2020/21, working with Pentabus Young Writers, and creating the award-winning digital production of *The Silence and the Noise*, many of my best experiences working in theatre have been with Pentabus. They make important and thrilling work, and I'm delighted join as an Associate."*

ENDS.

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IMAGES AVAILABLE HERE: [Pentabus Associate Artist Images](#).

Associate Artist Biographies

Katie Elin-Salt (she/her)

Katie is a writer, actor and creative arts therapist originally from Bridgend, South Wales and now living in Cardiff.

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She trained in acting at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, and has worked for many years since as an actor on stage and screen (credits include National Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe, Paines Plough, Theatr Clwyd, Stella, Coronation Street). Katie discovered a love of writing later in life, whilst working as an actor in the Paines Plough roundabout season (2017-2018). From there, she wrote her first play *Splinter*, which won her a place in both the Royal Court Introduction to Playwriting programme and Soho Theatre's Writer's lab. She then went on to write *Sprinkles*, which has since been produced by both Dirty Protest and The Other Room, Cardiff. Her next play *Celebrated Virgins* premiered in Theatr Clwyd in 2022, and went on to be named as one of the Top 10 plays of the Year by the Telegraph. Recently, Katie has enjoyed writing two festive commissions for Sherman Theatre, Cardiff (*Hansel and Gretel*, 2023; *Little Red Riding Hood*, 2024). Katie has been a member of the Channel 4 Screenwriting Programme and the BBC Voices cohort and is currently busy working on her first screenplay. Katie is also founder and artistic director of Oshi's World - Wales' first company to make bespoke theatre for those with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD), and is a qualified Music Therapist.

Katie is very passionate about inspiring the next generation of writers - and has been privileged to facilitate several groups for young writers. Firstly the Sherman Theatre's Introduction to Playwriting group and secondly Pentabus' own young writers' group.

Sophie Ellerby (she/her)

Alumni Pentabus Writer In Residence, Sophie Ellerby writes for stage and screen. Her career began as an actor at fifteen, starring in *This is England* (Shane Meadows). Her debut play 'LIT', co-produced in 2019 by HighTide and Nottingham Playhouse, had a sell out run and rave reviews. The Guardian cited her as one of the 2023 stage sensations to look out for. *Lit* is currently being developed for television with Griffin Pictures and the BFI. Other theatre work includes: *Three* (Arcola Theatre), *Function* (Criterion Theatre), *to whom it may concern*, (Cardboard Citizens tour), *Lysistrata* (Lyric Hammersmith), and *painkiller* (Theatre Royal Stratford East). She has a number of projects in development, including play commissions with Fifth Word Theatre and Runaway Productions, a political musical with 'Standing At the Sky's Edge' producers, Various Productions, an original TV series co-written with Pete Jackson (*Somewhere Boy*), and a co-commission with the Kiln theatre and Sky. Her debut short 'The Walk', starring Adeel Akhtar, played in Competition for Best Short at the BFI London Film Festival. Her second short, 'CARE', funded by The Uncertain Kingdom, is currently in post production. Sophie's writing centres bold, beautifully flawed characters and aims to tackle provocative societal questions in an entertaining and human way.

Naeem Hayat (he/him)

Naeem trained at RADA. Theatre as an actor includes *The Girl On The Train* (UK Tour); *Nora : A Dolls House* (Royal Exchange Theatre); *The Village* (Theatre Royal Stratford East); *Sonnet Walks: Shakespeare Within The Abbey*, *The Captive Queen*, Globe 2 Globe world tour of *Hamlet* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Faster-Higher-Stronger-Straighter* (Dominion Studio).

Film includes *Duperie*, *Undercliffe*.

Naeem was Resident Associate Director for Shakespeare's Globe 2023. As Co-Director – *The Comedy of Errors* (Shakespeare's Globe); as Director - *SEEN* (Pentabus) and *Burnt at the Stake* (Shakespeare's Globe). As Globe Associate Director- *King Lear* (directed by Helena Kaut Howson); *The Tempest* (co-directed by Sean Holmes and Diane Page); *Henry V* (directed by Holly Race Roughan); *The Comedy of Errors* and *Much Ado About Nothing* (directed by Sean Holmes).

Tom Powell (he/him)

Tom is a playwright and screenwriter whose work has won the Papatango Prize, Off West End Award, Broadstairs International Film Festival Best Film, Harry Porter Prize, and OTR National Radio Drama Prize. He was Clive and Sylvia Richards Foundation Writer-in-Residence at Pentabus 2020/21, selected for the BBC Studios Writers Academy in 2019/20, has been a BBC/Arts Council England New Creative, and has written broadcast episodes of *EastEnders* and *Holby City*. Tom has been selected for writers' groups at the Royal Court, Southwark Playhouse, Criterion Theatre, Soho Theatre, was a member of the Soho Writers Alumni Group for 5 years, and has co-led Pentabus Local Young Writers, Young Company, and National Young Writers Programme. He is a patron of Southwark Playhouse Young Company and an Associate Artist at Pentabus.

His first play, *I Dare You*, toured the UK and was shortlisted for the Soho Young Writers Award. His second play, *Little Echoes*, was Off-West End Award nominated. His third play, *The Silence and the Noise* won the Papatango Prize, toured the UK in audio form in a co-production with ETT and Papatango, and was called a 'modest masterpiece' by the Stage in its 5* review. A digital production, co-produced by Pentabus and Rural Media, won Best Film and Best Actor at the BFFI, and an Off West End Award for Best Online Production. His fourth play, *Surfacing*, had a sold-out preview run at VAULT festival in 2023 and toured nationally in 2024. His original audio drama, *Love Beyond the Zoo*, was broadcast on BBC Radio 4Xtra and is available [here](#) (from 16'37).

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His work has been translated into Polish and Korean. He is published by Methuen/Bloomsbury.

Anoushka Warden (she/her)

Anoushka studied BA Theatre Studies at Kingston University and undertook a Masters in Acting for Screen at Central School of Speech and Drama. Following her studies, Anoushka acted on stage and screen and wrote and acted with a comedy sketch group. Alongside this, she worked in PR at the Theatre Royal Haymarket and then Head of Press at the Royal Court Theatre – where she also produced The Playwright's Podcast with Simon Stephens.

Her first play, *My Mum's A Tw*t*, was staged at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre in January 2018 with Patsy Ferran performing the one-women show.

She was picked as one of 12 writers for the 2018 Channel 4 Screenwriting course and wrote her first half-hour television script, *Devongirl*. Anoushka performed in a new version of *My Mum's A Tw*t* at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe throughout August 2019. In 2020, it was then released as an Audible play with Susan Wokoma performing.

Anoushka won the Platform Presents Playwright's Prize for her second play, *My Dad's a Cu*t* in 2020. Her third play *Toed*, performed by Liv Hill, was released digitally with Pentabus Theatre Company in 2022.

Anoushka's first novel *I'm F*cking Amazing* was picked up in a pre-empt by Trapeze UK and in the US by Double Day and published in March 2024.

She is currently developing Jessica Hepburn's two books, *The Pursuit of Motherhood* and *21 Miles*, into a feature film with Erebus Pictures/BFI and is working with Fifth Season on writing the Television series of *I'm F*cking Amazing*. Her first short film *Gobble* is out this year.

Anoushka has held artistic roles at The Bunker Theatre as Associate Artist and is currently an Associate at Pentabus Theatre.

About Pentabus

'... One of British theatre's unsung treasures.'
The Guardian

Pentabus is the nation's rural theatre company, based in Shropshire. We are the only rural touring company that is committed to producing new work and tours to communities across the UK and beyond.

Our work brings communities and young people together, bringing outstanding contemporary productions with sector leading creative teams, directly to isolated rural communities, as well as platforming rural stories in urban settings.

Over five decades we've produced over 300 new plays, supported 120 playwrights and reached over half a million audience members. We've won awards and created lasting relationships with artists, venues and audiences across the country, and were the first to live stream from a village hall.

We excel at finding and nurturing new talent and have hosted Writers in Residences since 2014. These playwrights have gone on to be commissioned by the Birmingham Rep, Bristol Old Vic, Hampstead Theatre, HighTide, Manchester Royal Exchange, Nottingham Playhouse, Royal Court, The Bush, and the National Theatre.

We champion people of all ages to explore their creativity with particular emphasis on creating pathways into careers in the creative industries for those underrepresented, and people who live rurally under 30. Pentabus Young Company is our initiative offering playwriting workshops in schools, further and higher education, work experience and mentorships. As well as the opportunity to join our Young Writers' Programme, which celebrates its 10th year, and has catapulted many writers into careers in the arts, with recent graduate credits including Radio 4, BBC One, and Bristol Old Vic, as well as Tinniswood and Olivier Award nominations.