

# **Crippling Breath: Theatre Collaborator Recruitment Pack**

Do you use long-term ventilation? Are you interested in theatre performance, production or design? We are currently seeking three people (based in London or able to commute to London, including for regular workshops, residencies, and an up-to eight week rehearsal process) who use ventilators to help them breathe part or full-time, want to develop their theatre-making skills, and would like to co-create, either by designing or performing in a lead role in an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. It will be performed in summer 2027.

## **1. Background**

Adapting this play is part of a wider research project exploring the experiences of people who use long-term ventilation. It will be directed by Jamie Hale, an experienced director and Artistic Director at CRIPTic Arts. Jamie uses non-invasive ventilation overnight and part-time during the day.

The research project is called **Crippling Breath: Towards a new cultural politics of respiration**. Crippling Breath is a new 5-year interdisciplinary programme of research funded by a Wellcome Trust Discovery Award. The project is based at the University of

Sheffield, in partnership with [Pathfinders Neuromuscular Alliance](#), [the Art House](#), [CRIPtic Arts](#) and the NHS.

Collaborating in a series of discussions, rehearsals, research, and practical activities, we will unpick what it means to us to live ventilated—the expectations, pressures, and experiences—and how those can be explored and exploded through this reimagining of *Romeo and Juliet*. Our discussions and practice will form a vital contribution to Crippling Breath.

## 2. Roles

The roles we're recruiting for are:

- Romeo
- Juliet
- Design or Production Creative

These are paid roles (see section on payment below). All three people will contribute to the concept, design, and staging of the final play, whilst developing their own performance, production, and creative skills, and wider expertise in working with text, design, and staging.

## **Performers**

For the roles of Romeo and Juliet, performers for either role can be of any gender and the script will be adapted accordingly. Your application will put you into consideration for both roles.

No acting experience or background is required, but you must be willing and able to perform using your ventilation on-stage and be confident that, with support and training, you could learn and take on the role.

## **Design or Production Creative**

For the Design or Production Creative role, you must be willing to take part in the full research and development process, including participating in performance skills workshops, even if you are not a performer.

You can have an interest in any element of the theatrical process (e.g. producing, sound design, set and costume design, lighting design, movement direction, assistant direction, dramaturgy, access coordination, etc.), or in Shakespearean text and performance. Your role in the research and development process will be based on your main interests.

**You can have any level of experience in the area you are applying in to be considered for this role.**

The role in the final production that the Design or Production Creative takes on will be agreed between them and the Director. This will take into consideration the needs of the show, and their background, skill level and experience.

### **3. Eligibility**

Everyone who uses ventilation has a specific personal experience of what this means for them. In this part of Crippling Breath, we are focusing on a particular group of ventilation-users and their stories whose machines keep them alive. As a result:

- Applicants must usually use a form of ventilation (biPAP, non-invasive ventilation, or tracheostomy ventilation) for at least a few hours per day or night.
  - Performer applicants must be willing to perform whilst using ventilation (this is not required for the Design and Production Creative role).
  - If you have previously been on ventilation for an extended period and are not at present, or you use other forms of mechanical breathing assistance (e.g. cough assist machines) please contact us to discuss eligibility.
- People who use CPAP, APAP, biPAP / bilevel ventilation, NIV, or other forms of ventilation solely for managing

obstructive, mixed or central sleep apnea are unlikely to be eligible for this opportunity.

- If the sleep apnea results from a progressive underlying condition (e.g. a muscular dystrophy) which will increase your ventilation requirements and decrease your lung function over time please contact us to discuss eligibility.
- Applicants must be willing to draw on, discuss, and share their lived experience of ventilation in the creation of this work.
- Applicants must be legally eligible to work in the UK.
- Applicants must be aged 18 years or older.

## **4. Process**

- All aspects of the process are paid.
- We will work together in 13 collaborative workshops.
- These workshops will usually be in-person in London and may involve preparation time and reading or watching materials.
- There will also be 3x five-day research and development (R&D) weeks.
- These R&D weeks will be in person in London.

- You may also have remote meetings and independent preparation time.
- There are more details about the rehearsal and performance period in summer 2027 below.

## **Workshops**

The 13 workshops will explore the relationships between breath, ventilation, and how we tell the story of Romeo and Juliet. The first of these will take place in October 2025, and they will be spread through to winter 2026. What we say and do in these workshops will also form part of the research materials for the wider Crippling Breath project.

## **Research and development**

There will also be 3 research and development (R&D) weeks. These will be in-person in London, and are expected to take place in March, June, and November 2026.

During these R&D weeks, we will focus on building necessary performance, production and design skills. You will work alongside external experts and actors to develop a section of the script, and the R&D will end with a sharing to an invited audience.

We will also use these weeks to learn how we create accessible ways of rehearsing that work for everyone in the space, before we go into the rehearsal period and stage the full play.

## **Rehearsal and performance**

We expect the play to be staged in summer 2027, with the Performers in the lead roles, and the Design or Production Creative taking a major part in developing the play. The process of rehearsing and staging the play will be supported by a full creative team.

## **5. Payment**

This is a paid role.

For the **workshop period and associated meetings**, you will receive a fee of £7,500, which is expected to equate to approximately 50 days of work (£150 per day). As well as the 13 workshops in London, this period will include:

- Production and design meetings
- One-to-one meetings
- Support from the research or artistic teams
- Time researching and learning scripts, etc.

We will work with you to track and use this time effectively.

For each of the three **R&D weeks**, you will receive an additional fee of £750 for five days (£150 per day).

The fee for **rehearsals and performances** is to be confirmed, but it will be compliant with relevant trade union rates.

We do not have funding to pay for travel and accommodation under normal circumstances. If you would face extra costs to participate which result from you being disabled, and which would make participating impossible for you without funding, please talk to us, or apply anyway and explain the situation in your application.

We will also give you guidance on how to apply for Access to Work for further support, if necessary.

If you are in receipt of Government benefits, you may wish to consider how this contract may impact upon your income. We are aware that some benefits stipulate limits to permitted work hours or earnings, for example, Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit. If this applies to you, it may be helpful to check in with the Department providing the benefit.

Seeking your own advice is always recommended as everyone's circumstances are different, but some useful places to find out more information about working and receiving Government benefits are listed below:

- [Employment and Support Allowance \(ESA\): Working while you claim - GOV.UK](#)



- [Work you can do while getting ESA - Citizens Advice.](#)
- [Permitted work factsheet - GOV.UK](#)
- [Health conditions, disability and Universal Credit: If you have a Work Capability Assessment - GOV.UK](#)

If you are concerned about this, and think it may be a barrier to making an application, we would encourage you to get in touch by emailing Grace Joseph: [g.a.joseph@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:g.a.joseph@sheffield.ac.uk)

## **6. How to apply**

**You can submit your application via our Google form (linked on the web page). Please make sure all files are clearly labelled with your name. If you have any questions about submitting your application, please email Grace ([g.a.joseph@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:g.a.joseph@sheffield.ac.uk)).**

All Performer applicants will be considered for both Romeo and Juliet.

You may apply both as a Performer and as a Design or Production Creative. If you do so, please send us everything required for both roles.

To apply, please send us:

- **A short audio recording, video, or piece of writing exploring how you would bring your experience as a**

**ventilation-user to this project**, and what it means in your life more broadly.

- **A CV or letter sharing any experiences, background, or interest** you have in Shakespeare, theatre, acting, design, literature, performance, history, culture and society, psychology, respiratory conditions, voice, body or movement, research, or anything else you feel is relevant.
  - For each of these, written responses should be **maximum 500 words**, and video/audio should be maximum 4 minutes in length. You are welcome to apply in fewer than 500 words, or with a shorter video or audio file.

## **Performers**

If you are applying for a Performer role, please also send:

- **A short video of you performing** one of the two speeches at the end of this document (page 14).
  - We would prefer that you are using your ventilator whilst performing the script section, but this is not essential.
  - This can be filmed on a phone or webcam—we don't mind about video quality.

- Ideally, it will show you roughly from waist upwards, but do not worry too much about the positioning and framing.
- What we are interested in is how you perform that section of script, and the ways you use your voice and body to explore and communicate its meaning.

## **Design or Production Creative**

If you are applying for the Design or Production Creative role, you do not have to do a self-tape, but please also send:

- Up to **one side of A4 of text, and/or up to 4 pages of images, and/or up to 4 minutes of video, and/or up to 4 minutes of audio** that you believe showcases why you would be suitable for this role.
  - This could be a portfolio of art or sound you've made, an explanation of how you've organised and managed an event, or anything else that you think shows your interest and suitability for this.
  - You are welcome to apply in fewer than 500 words or with a shorter video or audio file.

## **7.Returning your application**

Please submit your application to us by **5pm on Tuesday 26th August, 2025**.

We are hosting an information session for applicants to come along and ask any questions they may have about the role. This session will be online (date to be confirmed). Please email Grace if you would like to attend: [g.a.joseph@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:g.a.joseph@sheffield.ac.uk)

### **What next?**

We will aim to contact all shortlisted candidates by Tuesday 9th September. At this point, we may invite you for an interview online to learn more about you and to tell you more about the role. We will send interview questions to you ahead of the interview.

### **How we will use this information**

Please note, all personal and professional information provided as part of your application will be kept confidential and secure, according to the University of Sheffield's Good Research and Innovation Practices (GRIP) Policy. If you would like a copy of this policy, or have any question about our storage of your information, please contact the Principal Investigator of Crippling Breath, Dr Kirsty Liddiard: [k.liddiard@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:k.liddiard@sheffield.ac.uk)

## **Ethics statement**

We have received full ethical approval for this project via the University of Sheffield Ethics Committee. As part of your residency, you will be expected to read and engage with a participant information sheet and sign a consent form. If you have any questions about this at this early stage, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

**On behalf of the Crippling Breath Team, we would like to thank you for your time and interest in our project.**

## Speeches for Performer applicants:

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?  
Deny thy father and refuse thy name.  
Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love  
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.  
'Tis but thy name that is my enemy:  
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.  
What's Montague? It is nor hand nor foot  
Nor arm nor face nor any other part  
Belonging to a man. O be some other name.  
What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet;  
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,  
Retain that dear perfection which he owes  
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,  
And for that name, which is no part of thee,  
Take all myself.

### OR:

What lady is that which doth enrich the hand  
Of yonder knight?  
O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!  
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear—  
Beauty too rich for use, for Earth too dear.  
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows  
As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.  
The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand  
And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.  
Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight,  
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.