

# OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

GM CULTURE 2020/2021



Quays Culture – Mystery Bird

# GM CULTURE

The majority of GMCA cultural investment goes to the GM Culture Portfolio (84%, Portfolio, 13% Strategic funding, 3% programme management).

This report outlines activity undertaken by the GM Culture and Night Time Economy teams, as well as highlighting activity delivered by the GM Culture Portfolio of 35 organisations, between April 2020 and March 2021. This is just a snapshot of activity delivered throughout the year.

Despite significant challenges faced by cultural, creative and night-time economy businesses, artists and freelancers, the sector in Greater Manchester has shown huge resilience and compassion, not just keeping going, but proactively supporting and entertaining our residents throughout the year.

## UNITED WE STREAM

One of the biggest projects developed and delivered by the GM Culture and Night Time economy teams during the pandemic was United We Stream. From its first show on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 to the final show of the year on New Years' Eve, 2020, United We Stream produced 308 hours of live content, amassed more than 20 million views, provided a platform for more than 448 artists and cultural organisations and raised £583,300 for 130 cultural organisations and individuals affected by the pandemic and supported 30 charities including Nordoff Robbins, Manchester Mind, Manchester Cladiators and the GM Mayor's Charity, supporting rough sleepers.

The project was instigated by GM Night Time Economy Adviser Sacha Lord and GM Mayor Andy Burnham was developed and delivered by GMCA Culture, Night Time Economy and Comms departments alongside digital media and creative production company Badger and Combes, PR Firm LG Publicity, The Met in Bury and a host of media and corporate partners.

The power of culture, to bring people together and reduce feelings of isolation was demonstrated in the thousands of messages from our audience telling us how important UWS was in feeling connected to people throughout the pandemic. Our audience numbers and levels of engagement on social media are testament to people's desire to feel part of a community. We provided moments of joy that lifted peoples' spirits and reminded people of better times in the most challenging of years. The impact of the incredible artists and organisations we worked with, in providing those moments of joy, helping people feel connected and raising money for those in need is a true demonstration of the collective power of culture. Audiences reached by a core team of six during this nine-month project would have filled Manchester Arena 1000 times. Talent from Greater Manchester was given a global platform, with shows streamed in more than 150 countries around the world, keeping Greater Manchester culture on the global stage while our physical stages were closed.

The project has already won a number of awards, including Prolific North – Social Media campaign and Digital Campaign of the Year, Global Content Awards – Charity/Not For Profit Content Campaign of the Year and Northern Digital – Best Digital Marketing Campaign.

***‘You have created a platform that is not only spreading a public health message but also bringing joy at a time when it is seriously needed – not just those watching at home but also those performing. Lockdown has been so tough but performing on UWS has really helped me’***

***‘Everyone involved has been incredible. You lifted us up during some of our lowest points of 2020 and it felt like community. Thank you for that.’***

***‘You have been my saviour through 2020 and have kept me dancing in my kitchen’***

***‘You’re making me feel less alone. Thank you UWS, I love you’***

***‘UWS will be remembered as a cultural event with every bit as much resonance as the summer of love. Brilliant’***

## UWS ARTIST LIST

3 Muses	Chloe Foy	Giant Rooks	Jordan Lee	Lucy Deakin	Nile Marr	Shay Rowan
A Certain Ratio Sound	Chris Donnelly	Gina Breeze	Jose Dias Quartet	Lucy Scott	Nishla Smith	Shifting Spheres
Aalice	Chris Jam	Glass Caves	Josh Connolly	Luke Unabomber	Nodding Dog Comedy	Shirley May
Abbie Ozard	Chris Maude	Glue 70	Josh Widdecombe	Madchester	Norman J	Simon Donohoe
Abena	Chris Payne	Gong Bath	JSKY	Maja Bugge	Not Bad For A Girl	Simon Woods
Ad Hoc Dave	Clint Boon	Graeme Park	Julie Wells	Mali Hayes	Not Quite Light	Skeltr
Afriquoi	Cold Cave	Greg Wilson	Justin Eagleton	Manchester Camerata	Nothing But Thieves	Skiddle
Aitha Chaudry	Contact Young Identity	Grimm Twins	Justin Moorehouse	Manchester City Of Literature	NTS	Solarado
Al and Al	Corrie Stars	Hacienda	Justin Robertson	Manchester Cladiators	Nutters Restaurant	Sonice
Al Baker	Crazy P Soundsystem	Hacienda Classical	Karen Harding	Manchester Food and Drink	Olivia Moore	Sophie Sviensson
Alan Carr	Criss Nicksson	Hanz	Karen McBride	Manchester Jazz Festival	One Tree Island	Soul Central
Alberto Mombelli	d.clemente	Harriet Dyer	Katbrownsugar	Manchester Mind	Ordinary Friends	Stanley Chow
Alex Casa	Damani Dennisur	Hattie Pearson	Kate Lowes	Manchester Pride	Paul Hartnoll	Stealing Sheep
Allister Whitehead	Dan Nightingale	Head For The Hills	Kate Robbins	Manchester Queens	Paul Husband	Stephen Morris
Amy Burdon	Danny Beard	Headstock Festival	Kath McDermott	Manchester Survivors Choir	Paul Oakenfold	Steve Rotherham
Amy Coney	Danny Tenaglia	Henge	Keisha Thompson	Mancsy	Paul W Dixon	Sticky Heat
Andrea Trout	Dave Gorman	Herbie Saccini	Kelli-Leigh	Mandla Rae	PBR Streetgang	Stone Icon
Andrew Nutter	Dave Haslam	Herbie Scani	Kelly Wood	Marco Gianni	Perisu	Stretford Food Hall
Andy Burnham	Dave Viney	Herbivorous	Kevante A.C Cash	Mark Birchall	Pete Obsolete	Stuart Barkley
Andy Scott	David Blake	Hermanito	Kevin Saunderson	Mark Lanegan	Peter Hook	Stuart Hadfield
Angela Hartnett	David Fox	Hewan Clarke	Kiana	Mark Reeder	Peter Saville	Sub Sub
Anna FC Smith	David Gleave	Hidden	Kiana	Marketing Manchester	Peter Walsh	Suddi Raval
Anthony Mulryan	David Kam	Hidden Gems Quartet	Killing No-One	Martin Loose-Cuts	Phuture	Sufragette City
Anthony Barkworth Knight	David Morales	High Hoops	Kim Catrall	Martin Moscrop	Pippy Eats	Take Me To Church
Archipelago	David Morales	Hits Radio	Kirsty Almeida	Mark XTC	Pixie Lott	Tampopo
Argh Kid	Dean McCulloch	Homoelectric	Kit Downes	Marvin Jay	Prospa	Tamsin Embleton
Arron J Dean	Debra King	Hong Kong Ping Pong	K-Klass	Mary-Ellen McTague	Qubek	Tez Ilyas
Art Battle Manchester	Dev C	Horse Meat Disco	Kodaline	Massey	Rachel Fairburn	Thanda Gumede
Arthur Baker	Diving Station	House Gospel Choir	Korzi	Matty White	Rachel Stockley	The Beat
Atike	DJ Black Betty	House Of Ghetto	Krafty Kuts	Maurizio Cecco	Rainbow Noir	The Black Madonna
Auntine Anna P	DJ Brace	Husk	Krysko	Maxine Peake	Ralph Little	The Creameries
Aurie Styla	DJ Caino	Inner City	Krystal Klear	MC Finchy	Randolph Matthews	The Hinchcliffe Arms
Baba Youngblood	DJ Danny Mac	Isiah Hull	Kwasi	Meat Free	RebeccaNever Becky	The Killers
Bad Fun	DJ Harvey	Izzy Bizu	La Discotheque	Meduula	Red Rack'Em	The Met
Badly Drawn Boy	DJ Jake Slater	J Casa	Lady Beige	Mel C	Red Saunders	The Mouse Outfit Soundsystem
Baked A La Ska	DJ Kenty	Jack Curley	Lady Ice	Melanie C	Reece Williams	The Other
Baratxuri	DJ Kyle	Jack Whitehall	Lancashire Hotpots	Melanie Williams	Ren Harvieu	The Slow Readers Club
Basilico	DJ Obeka	Jackie Kay	Lapsley	Mi Gusta	Rich Reason	The Soul Twins
BB	DJ Paulette	James Bay	Lara Jones	Micky Finn	Richard Davis	Third Man Productions
Beardyman	DJ Pierrer	James Fry	Larkins	Mike Garry	Richy V	Tim Spector
Bec Hill	DJ Woody	James Greenwood	Larkins	Mike Hall	Ricky Hatton	Todd Terry
Becky Hill	DJ Woody	James Hall	Lauren Pattinson	Mike Joyce	Riot Jazz	Tom Harris
Ben Cottrell	Doves	James Lyons	Lee Ridley	Mike Tracey	Rita Ora	Tom Wainwright
Bernard Sumner	Dr Radha	Jamie Bull	Lenny Fontana	Mike Tracey	Rob Da Bank	Tom Wainwright
Bethany Black	Dub FX	Jardel Rodrigues	Leo B Stanton	Mikey Donn	Rob Kerford	Tom Woodward
Bez	Eat Well Manchester	Jason Singh	Levi Love	Mix-Stress	Rob Owen-Brown	Tony Ashworth
Big Daddy Kane	Ed Kaniek	Jay Taylor	Lewis Wright	MLO	Rob Tissera	Tony Humphries
Bill Brewster	Elbow	Jay Wearden	Liam Brownie	Moby	Robyn March	Tony Husband
Black Eyes	Elephant Sessions	Jaye Ward	Liam Eshghi	Mooving Festival	Roger Sanchez	Tony Walsh
Black Pride	Elixir Nicholson	Jazzanova	Liam Frost	Mr B The Gentleman Rhym	Roger Shelley	Tony Walsh
Blok Presents	Ella Otomewo	Jenna G	Liam Gallager	Mr Scruff	Roisin Murphy	Trust A Fox
Blue Rose Code	Emily Capell	Jennifer Hardy	Limo	Mr Scruff	Roma Havers	Ubnunye
Brandon Bloc	Emily Gilhespy	Jenny Ryan	Limbo Radio	Mr Vast	Ross Parker	Vince Vega
Brandon Flowers	Erol Alkan	Jesca Hoop	Lisa Allen	Mr Wilson's Second Liners	Roy Davis Jr	Vzion
Bright Light Bright Light	Faithless	Jill Furmanovsky	Lisa Godwin	Mr Wilson's Second Liners	Russel Kane	Walk The Plank
Brighter Sound	Fat Pride	Jim Salvesson	Logan and Wilcox	Mystique	Saf	Warren Jackson
British Culture Archive	Fat Tony	Jim Stanton	Lone Lady	Nasima	Salvis	Werkha
Cameron Brown	Faye MacCalman	Joe Motion	Lost Control	Nasima Bee	Sam Fischer	Wes Eisold
Capital FM	Fleetmac Wood	Joel Corry	Lost Voice Guy	Natalie McCool	Sarah Heneghan	WiggleDance
Carl Craig	Francine Luce	John Bramwell	Lottery Winners	Nemone	Sarah Tandy	Will Tramp!
Carl Kennedy	Funkademia	John Helliwell	Louie Vega	New Order	Save Our Scene	XS Manchester
Casa House Party	Gareth Brooks	John McGuinness	Louise Redknapp	Nick Kagame	Scruff of The Neck	Yaatri
Catherine Tyldesley	Gary Usher	John Thompson	Louise Wallwein	Nicole May	Shamshad Khan	Yoga Rave
Ceeow	George King	Johnny Ball	Lovebirds	Nigel Clucas	Shari Denson	Yohan
Chande	Georgina Meek	Jon Dasilva	Lovebreak	Nigel Turner	Sharples	Yousef
Cheddar Gorgeous	Georgina Robinson	Jon Richardson	Lovescene	Night & Day	Shaun Ryder	Zoe Ball

# GREAT PLACE PROJECT

Through Great Place funding provided by Arts Council and National Heritage Lottery Fund, Greater Manchester has established new collaborations between the cultural, voluntary and health sectors, exploring new ways to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. This includes creative approaches to children and adolescent mental health, creative social prescribing, the wellbeing of LGBTQ older people in the housing sector and cultural activism and volunteering as a way to combat social isolation in older people through the Culture Champions programme.

One of the principal findings from the action research element of the Great Place programme has been to identify the health sector as a key partner in the drive to diversify and increase audiences and participation for arts and culture. Research by Manchester Metropolitan University has confirmed Greater Manchester's position as a national lead and potential worldwide reference in the field of Culture, Health and Wellbeing and made recommendations as to how this can be maintained and built upon.

During the first lockdown in March 2020, GMCA, project partners and the Great Place project manager were able to replan the Great Place programme to continue during restrictions. Subsequent lockdown in GM (autumn/winter 2020) and the national lockdown in January 2020 made it impossible to deliver against this new plan. We have again replanned the programme to be Covid safe; that is, it can be delivered under Covid restrictions. The exception to this is the largescale project Cap & Dove which is reliant on local authorities permitting public gatherings.

Since the start of Covid-19, Great Place has delivered a significant amount of activity, some as part of the original programme plan as some as a response to the pandemic. This has included Old Frame New Picture; a photography competition and billboard campaign to challenge narratives around ageing. Using supermarket billboards, this managed to reach an audience of 84,000 with 1.6 million impressions, even during lockdown. Creative Care Packs was developed in response to the pandemic and brought together more than 50 cultural organisations, all ten local authorities and their community response hubs, the voluntary sector and more than 300 volunteers to develop and deliver more than 50,000 packs of creative activities, ideas and materials to digitally excluded residents in GM, including school children, young adults and older residents.

There is also a significant amount of activity that was unable to be delivered in its planned format, due to restrictions in place across the city region and before September, 2021, we will deliver this activity in a Covid safe manner. This includes This Place of Mine; a partnership with FutureEverything and young people in Beswick, Stalybridge, Oldham, Leigh and Rochdale to co-imagine the future of our high streets and town centres through digital art, culture and creativity; Back in the Closet; exploring homophobia in older person's residential schemes in partnership with housing associations and LGBT Foundation and Escape Room; an immersive theatre experience co-created with and for autistic young people in partnership with Libraries GM.

# NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

As well as instigating and delivering United We Stream, the GM NTE team spent the year supporting businesses throughout Greater Manchester, convening and supporting the GM NTE Recovery Taskforce, hosting webinars to help with specific issues affecting the sector including licencing, mental health and making premises covid-secure.

The team liaised with key national and local partners including the Night Time Industries Association, UK Music and various government departments to advocate for the sector, leading national conversations around appropriate support for the sector.

In November 2020, the Night Time Economy Office, led by Night-Time Economy Adviser Sacha Lord published the GM Night Time Economy Recovery Blueprint, The blueprint details for priorities for local government support for the sector. Focuses will include lobbying of central government on the industry's behalf, support for businesses to adapt and diversify in new trading conditions, and mental health support for workers in the sector.

The night-time economy supports 33% of Greater Manchester's workforce, and over the last 20 years growth in the sector has outpaced the wider economy in the city-region, however, workers are disproportionately low-paid compared to the wider economy. The sector has also been disproportionately hit by Covid-19 restrictions, with 90% of night-time businesses closed during lockdown, and a larger proportion of jobs in Greater Manchester are in 'shut-down' sectors compared to other UK regions.

In February 2021, the team launched the Night Time Economy Office, a resource for organisations and individuals within the night time economy, offering bespoke support and signposting to guidance and funding opportunities to support the sector through this challenging time.

The Night Time Economy team has been piloting GM's Creative Improvement Districts, a way of working with districts across Greater Manchester to support culture-led regeneration of our high streets and town centres. This has culminated in a part-time secondment to Oldham Council to help embed principles and deliver activity on the ground.

## OTHER STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

In March, GMCA Launched GM Covid Commissions—individual grants of £500, providing musicians, poets, illustrators, artists, writers and designers with vital funds and creating an archive of work that documents the first few months of lockdown. 60 artists were supported and the submissions provided focus and funds for artists in GM and received critical acclaim, with airplay on Guy Garvey's BBC 6 Music Show and publication in Caught By The River.

*'I want to thank you, as by giving me the chance to make the commission, you showed me that I was able to do something so big and quite scary. Since this happened, I have finally opened an online shop and I've already had orders! My life is really changed for the best'.*

Gm Strategic funding was also used to support a variety of projects and partnerships, including Bury Town of Culture, the Creative Ageing Development Agency, Low Four, The North Will Rise Again, Ripples of Hope Festival, Marketing Manchester, GW Theatre and Chat Moss.

# GM CULTURE PORTFOLIO

## Art with Heart

During 2020/21 Salford-based Art with Heart used GMCA funding to engage with more than 51,000 residents. They were one of Arts Council England's top cultural picks of 2020 and provided work for 63 freelancers 88% of which have identities listed under the Equality Act 2010.

They hosted training, webinars, artist brew days and mentoring to more than 856 artists and creators in Greater Manchester. They paired five artists with 25 digitally excluded GM elder residents, facilitating more than 150 hours of creative conversations that resulted in a portfolio of co-created films and poems. To mark the 10th anniversary of the Equality Act 2010, a team of 18 GM artists all protected under the act explored if 'protection' is enough and what was need to have a more equal society in a post-pandemic world in a podcast. They hosted confidence boosting, resilience workshops for children to explore and feel safe, comfortable and understand their ADHD and supported 11 working class freelancers living and working in GM to create new work and develop their skills.

## Arts for Recovery in the Community

Arc is an arts organisation based in Stockport that serves communities across GM. through workshops, exhibitions and participatory arts projects to explore the links between creativity and wellbeing.

With ongoing funding from GMCA, Arc was able to transform its creative wellbeing programmes to online/remote delivery model and continue offering a lifeline to people experiencing mental ill health throughout 20/21. The team worked intensively with over 121 people experiencing serious mental health challenges. They also engaged a further 280 people from the community in online creative wellbeing courses, and had more than 2,000 people accessing online resources from Tameside and Trafford to Moscow and Texas! The Young People's Arc programme continued to support children, teenagers and families who were already particularly vulnerable and a new scheme, Culture Buddies supported older isolated people in Stockport through mailart.

*'This experience has been life changing for me, it's been amazing, I have had so much support and have really enjoyed connecting with the other mums...I feel very thankful'*  
Participant in project for women experiencing perinatal depression.

*"I attended Arc after I was discharged from hospital for my mental health. Arc gave me structure for the week which is something I struggle with... I'm still doing regular sessions and I love the #KeepingUsTogether online activities."* Adult participant.

## Brighter Sound

Manchester-based music charity Brighter Sound continued to provide opportunity for established and aspiring musicians from Greater Manchester. Activity delivered included a free programme inviting women and non-binary people to build a vision of what their career in music can be, recognising the significant gender imbalance in the music industry.

Brighter Sound also ran online music sessions for young people aged between 13 and 19, encouraging them to explore new ways to make music, and/or looking at music as part of their future career. They supported creative practitioners from across Greater Manchester with a series of online workshops around themes of health and wellbeing.

## Bury Met

The Met has worked hard during lockdown to look after its customers and communities by staying as accessible as possible for those who need it most. But the venue has combined local support with global reach as base for GMCA's United We Stream project.

Groups like Bury Youth Theatre and The Met's disability arts groups Met Express and Aiming High have been supported to move online to maintain creative and social links. The building had been made safely available for those unable to participate online whenever restrictions have allowed. The groups have been able to share work and recruit new members as creativity and sociability have become ever-more important in people's lives.

The Met has been lucky to keep its stages and studio alive with music and collaboration as plans for digital development hit fast forward during lockdown. As the production hub for United We Stream The Met was been seen by millions worldwide during 2020, hosting live bands, epic DJ sets, poetry and comedy. With Bury as the inaugural GM Town Of Culture The Met has been able to collaborate with Manchester City of Literature, Manchester Jazz Festival, Contact Theatre, Manchester Camerata, Headstock Festival and many more creative organisations across the city region to raise funds and share great art.

The Met's own digital work has included livestream gigs from the likes of The Slow Readers Club (who recorded their Top 20 album 91 Days In Isolation at The Met's Edwin St Recording Studios during lockdown) and The Lottery Winners. They have hosted artist conversations, shared the history of the building online and supported staff to learn a range of new skills that will help keep bringing music and creativity to new people. An ongoing programme of digital work to support independent and emerging musicians as lockdown eases will continue to reach new audiences.

The Met has also helped to create and commission new work from artists during lockdown, with the LGBT+ Arts & Culture network and Bury Town of Culture bursaries and in-kind support, and the newly-established Creative Case for Diversity group starting work on a hate crime awareness project.

## Cartwheel Arts

Cartwheel Arts delivered worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic using art to support disadvantaged and isolated residents in Rochdale. They delivered 6,000 family art packs across the borough, as identified by Rochdale Borough Council Equalities Team. Packs were delivered to schools and community organisations by Sky TV engineers volunteering in support of the community response.

Their Draw The Day programme, a 10 week online programme with storytelling and an interactive gallery supported asylum seekers and refugees in the borough to create 100 pieces of art.

*"My daughter (who has Severe learning Difficulties and Autism) is loving the activities you are providing, including the story telling. I think what you're doing is brilliant...I cannot thank you enough!"*

## Centre for Chinese Contemporary Arts

Since the onset of the pandemic, CFCCA focused on new ways to engage audiences and support artists and communities, particularly those hardest hit by COVID-19. Their Dumpling Social Club for older residents of the Manchester Chinese community was rolled out online, extending its reach across GM for those at most risk of isolation while the Art of Volunteering provided professional development opportunities for over 30 unemployed GM residents.

They opened two exhibitions Multiplicities of Flux and Autopsy of a Home and moved other activity online to include a new digital residency programme and digital commissions strand. A highlight includes nineteen ways of looking an Instagram Opera by artist Jasmin Kent Rodgman which raised awareness of COVID-racism in SE Asian communities.

## Comma Press

Throughout the pandemic, Comma continued to support emerging GM talent through various short story commissions and development opportunities. In partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University, it hosted a week-long creative writing conference aimed at aspiring authors across the North of England featuring workshops, pitching sessions and panels with industry professionals. It successfully transitioned its 12-week short story courses online (usually held in 7 cities across the North of England), and created bespoke events and workshops with cultural partners across the sector, including libraries, literature festivals and independent bookshops.

Comma also coordinated a short story prize with the University of Central Lancashire and developed a new series for its award-winning podcast, featuring several writers and academics from Greater Manchester. In order to support and engage local translators, Comma hosted Manchester-in-Translation, a series of talks and panels on the art of translation, as well as interactive workshops in some of the city's community languages (Urdu, Punjabi and Spanish). It also delivered various CPD workshops for independent publishers based in the North of England, with a focus on digital skills, and also co-ordinated a mentorship for aspiring publishers.



# Company Chameleon Dance Theatre

Despite dance's dependence on close physical proximity, Company Chameleon continued to support artists and residents in Greater Manchester throughout 2020 and 2021. On a weekly basis, Company Chameleon created and shared high-quality online content. As well as continuing to create as a company they facilitated hundreds of online dance sessions and challenges, keeping Greater Manchester moving, inspired and entertained throughout many lockdowns.

Highlights of the year included a performance of Amaranthine at Greenwich & Docklands International Festival in London, the country's first dance festival since lockdown and their Digital Pro Class comprising 40 free classes over 8 weeks with a different teacher each day of the week.

## Contact Theatre

Despite the challenges of Covid-19, in many ways Contact has never been busier. With additional/extension funding from several trusts and foundations, they have been able to keep most staff unfurloughed throughout, providing consistent delivery of their youth work. They were at the point of taking possession of their refurbished and expanded building in March '20 when the first lockdown struck, so moved all their youth programmes online, distributing laptops to young people lacking access (through support from Young Manchester). Those projects working with vulnerable young people - The Agency in North Manchester, music activity with Pupil Referral Units, and some of Contact's arts and health work - was able to continue face to face under National Youth Agency guidelines. In the summer they made the decision to move all public programming online, delivering a major programme of shows, festivals and events including: Our City Speaks, a United We Stream live spoken word event marking Black Lives Matter; commissioning young poets for Black History Month for CBBC Blue Peter; delivering Black Gold Arts Festival as a fully digital event in October; the Emerging Futures national youth leadership symposium; I Read Me: More Black Authors in Schools event; and Link Up, a series of GM LGBTQ+ artists' talks as a Queer Contact Festival trailblazer. Their family and schools festive show in December was a digital remake of previous Contact show The Forest of Forgotten Discos, written, directed and performed by an integrated disabled ensemble. Meanwhile Contact Young Company created a new show, 'The Starter Kit', exploring young people's role in social movements. In 2020-21 they have had 4,632 digital event attendances (with a further 30,000+ attendances at live-streamed activity), delivered 1,512 free participations for GM young people, and provided professional leadership training to 174 young people.

## English Folk Expo

When the pandemic hit English Folk Expo focussed on helping artists and the music industry keep afloat, learn new skills and prepare for the future. Under the banner of 'Folk Talk' they commissioned a series of talks about maximising social media opportunities for artists, about online music collaboration, and about all aspects of the music industry from respected and experienced industry professionals. They ran conferences exploring the lack of diversity in the folk sector, the latest changes in streaming licensing, running COVID-safe events and

more. They lobbied media and government to keep folk music in the public eye, specifically pressing the BBC to reinstate regional folk programmes and set up informal networks to provide cooperation and support amongst communities of artists, booking agents, promoters, disabled musicians and more.

They worked with the Official Charts Company to launch the first Official Folk Albums Chart on the weekend of Manchester Folk Festival with a massive live stream (25,000+ views), now running monthly to introduce audiences to great new folk albums. This included building partnerships with Folk on Foot to create a new monthly chart show and podcast reaching several thousand people each month. They built international partnerships to create one of the largest online sharing of folk music globally (Global Music Match), seeing 96 artists collaborate across 14 countries during 6 weeks of content, building new audiences for UK artists overseas and expanding their networks internationally.

## **Gaydio**

Despite the challenges that everyone has faced over the past year, Gaydio has remained on air and become a lively and engaging source of entertainment and support for many people across Greater Manchester. Their audience has doubled in the period as many people turn to radio while at home. They have kept in regular touch with artists and organisations, promoting their work and helping them to prepare for the re-opening of the cultural sector. During this time they have delivered a series of online workshops that skill people to become our cultural reporters and have a bank of talented and ambitious individuals raring to promote the GM cultural sector as the economy begins to unlock.

## **Global Grooves**

Global Grooves is Mossley based social enterprise that uses inspirational carnival arts practice to increase community capacity, boost cultural engagement and bring people together to celebrate their shared spaces and stories.

Whilst working together to overcome the immediate challenges of Covid and source emergency recovery funding to sustain their efforts, the Global Grooves team continued to develop creative projects to reach out into communities in Tameside.

They delivered a 12 week 'Creative Wellbeing' course in visual arts skills and seasonal crafts, funded by ESF. Their Heritage Lottery funded 'Cotton Culture' programme kept momentum, inviting a raft of guest speakers to speak about English folk arts, international links through wax printing, and local history – all building to a final exhibition at their Carnival Centre of Excellence, set to open in autumn 2021. They hosted 26 online performances via their 'Vale Live' programme, featuring local folk artists to appearances from international artists.

Global Grooves offered intensive fundraising support and training to raise over £400,000 supporting over 60 other UK and international artists and organisations rocked by the effects of the pandemic. Several of the team worked with Tameside Arts Ltd to design, kit out and transform their community space into a unique accessible theatre, dance and music studio at the Create Centre in Denton. They co-delivered a series of networking and practice-sharing 'Creative Conversations' with Creative Wellbeing Tameside and supported a cohort of 7 local organisations with bespoke training, coaching, fundraising and seed funding to prepare for post Covid face to face activity.

## GM Arts

Greater Manchester Arts has had boots on the ground in every GM district during the crisis delivering activity informed by local insight and need. Key work streams included;

Adapting planned activity. Funding supported at home digital activity in every GM district based on local interests, collections and assets. Examples include; Diverge in Trafford, BAM online and the Happy Festival in Bury, Express Yourself! Creative Spaces in Manchester, Get Creative at Home, Light Up Lockdown' in Oldham and an adapted Christmas show in Rochdale. GM Arts also looked at creative ways to record the pandemic's impacts on communities, such as Wigan Borough's Covid-19 Archive project.

Delivering an accessible cultural offer to those residents who might not be able to access digital cultural activity. Theatre by Telephone was provided in Tameside, 5,000 arts packs for Children were issued in Rochdale and a pop-up art show staged in Bury. Keeping Us Together was supported in Stockport whilst in Oldham, a trail of winter-themed windows was created by 18 freelance artists and local creative organisations. In Wigan, reminiscence packs were provided to residents in all 54 care homes in the borough.

Supporting colleagues in Public Health in the challenge of better communicating with residents. They commissioned ten micro-projects across GM focussing on communities of interest (care home residents, C & YP, those from a BAME background, economically marginalised etc.). These commissions tested out different approaches to generating connection and reducing social isolation.

GM Arts used the bulk of its funding to commission local artists across all GM districts. Members also supported skills development via webinars, online conferences and digital learning packages. Example include; Wedge Unlocked Bury, Preparing Your Creative Business for Christmas Bolton, and the Northern Lights Writers Conference Trafford. In Wigan, a Creative Freelancer COVID Fund was established, investing £47,000 through grants of up to £1,500 supporting 37 freelancers locally.

## Halle

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the work of the Halle over the past year. Their Education and ensembles programme works in partnership with GM and the Music Hubs to provide over 90,000 learning engagements – from care-homes to prisons, bringing music to people across the whole community. Due to lockdown restrictions, the organization has re-invented and even expanded many these educational and performance projects digitally using Halle St. Peter's as a base from which to disseminate projects with its childrens/youth choirs, ensembles, youth orchestra as well as the main Halle choir.

The new Ancoats Community Choir also flourished, and 9 local Workplace Choirs met regularly and involved over 150 singers (including an NHS choir) which had a positive impact on the mental well-being of its participants. These activities taking place in such difficult circumstances garnered many appreciative comments from participants, parents and carers. "We really appreciate the work all at the Hallé have put in to being so welcoming, accommodating and maintaining such rigorous safety standards whilst still allowing a degree

of socialising and music making with the children. It's been a real lift to my daughter after such a hard year, particularly for a 13-year old who was just finding her feet with independence as it was then all taken away.' Halle Youth Orchestra parent.

With concert halls closed to audiences, the orchestra worked in partnership with Bridgewater Hall and Halle St. Peter's to produce a critically acclaimed filmed Winter series of 10 concerts, broadcast across Greater Manchester, the UK and internationally: "All hail the Halle, as the North's great orchestra returns in Style" Daily Telegraph. The series included an array of diverse talent with range of artists including Jess Gillam, Simon Armitage, Lemn Sissay and Isata Kanneh-Mason, as well as specially commissioned new works from Hannah Kendall and Huw Watkins. A free Christmas concert featuring Halle ensembles, choirs and youth orchestra participants from across the GM region was watched by just over 40,000 people.

The Halle's Education department has worked closely with the two GM music hubs delivering an array of projects. Digitally produced schools' projects have included an Adopt a player project in 4 GM schools, filmed Set Works concerts for GCSE and A Level Students which was taken on by over 120 schools – watched by over 9000 young people. The Halle produced and created animated music films, such as "Goddess Gaia" which was seen across 150 primary schools and taken on by Eco Schools and organisation representing over 20,000 schools in the UK.

## HOME

Within weeks of the first lockdown being announced, HOME started the process of commissioning artists to make work in their homes for an audience confirmed to theirs. The Homemakers series included over 30 commissions, watched by almost 3,000 people in 34 countries. They also commissioned artist Nick Burton to create a weekly online comic strip, *Our Plague Year*, which is distributed via email to 3,900 subscribers each week and have been working with film distributors to make their trademark curated independent film selection available from home.

Engagement activity such as the Future 20 project, the BFI Film Academy and monthly AMP sessions for artists with different abilities and additional needs also pivoted to online, providing an important opportunity for young people to develop their artistic and business skills. Between 1 April and 30 Sep, HOME ran 589 engagement sessions across a range of projects online.

## MancSpirit

Trafford-based MancSpirit's journey with GMCA Culture started just as the Pandemic broke out. Working with GMCA has given the charity the platform to do so many positive things, with their creative community festivals providing a strong focus for rallying optimistic community activity and hope. It had been their intention to run these week long festivals in venues across each Borough but it became apparent very quickly that they needed to adapt and take everything online and in many ways this has worked better, opened up opportunity and enabled them to make their offer more inclusive and accessible.

With the festivals as a focus, they have worked extensively with Young Carers, Adult Carers, Older people and are currently developing this further to include Military Veterans and children with Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) requirements, with a separate programme supporting their parents. They use Culture and Creativity as a basis for reaching out to over 1,000 older people to improve Digital Inclusion, delivered creative online sessions to embed co-design and co-delivery into the provision for unpaid Carers in Trafford, provide paid sessional work for freelance 'creatives' in Music, Visual Arts, Crafts and Spoken Word throughout the year when their earnings were most affected. We also produce the Podcast 'That Great Manc Pod' which explores how creativity in all its forms helps people overcome difficult challenges and benefits vulnerable people in Greater Manchester Communities, including 'Our Trafford' festival specific 'special episodes' to support the work they do with GMCA Culture.

## Manchester Camerata

Generous support from ACE Emergency and CRF funds, Trusts and Foundations, and individuals has enabled the organisation to maintain its programme in schools and in care homes online, and to stream some concerts in 20/21. They took advantage of the furlough scheme and also made some redundancies in the office team and moved out of the city centre office, to Gorton. The drastic curtailment of engaged work throughout the UK and internationally has had a huge impact on freelance community and on business.

They reached 1,227,455 live / online across through a range of work, including a 10 episode series for 5 – 7 year olds - Mini Music Makers, an InnovateUK funded new platform for training & supporting carers in Dementia care settings throughout GM *'This has had an amazing result both on him and other residents and taught them how to communicate with each other through music.'* Carer, Salford

Untold – A new digital format series funded by private donations, focusing on story telling gained over 157k views on trailers and featured on United We Stream, as did two Hacienda Classical streams attracting over 1 million people. With Artistic Partners AMC Gospel they created a 6 short films from The Monastery – see 'Joyful' here attracting 57,000 views and with partners at HOME a programme focusing on Renewal which was filmed in the restaurant – see here. Radio 3 Broadcast in early January and further streaming has provided some work for the freelance community and provided GM audiences with some events. They've commissioned new work from RNCM alumni Daniel Kidane, worked with the poet Jackie Kay and wherever possible supported GM freelancers on streaming, capture, audio production and more.

## Manchester Histories

DigiFest 2020 took place online from Manchester Central Library on Friday 4th and Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September. It celebrated 50 years of the landmark legislation "The Chronically Sick and Disabled Person's Act 1970", affectionately known as 'Alf's Act'. The themes were 'celebrate, challenge, learn' and through an open call out to individuals and groups in Greater Manchester and beyond, a wonderful montage of disabled people's lives, histories, art, music, political struggles, and joyous creativity was produced. Compered by comedian Jackie Hagan, audiences were led into thought provoking, moving, entertaining and

fascinating contributions exploring the positive legacy of Alf's Act as well as the contemporary challenges of today.

The People's River project is a community-led project that explores the hidden histories of people who live and work alongside the River Irk. The project is inspired by the life and works of Friedrich Engels and marked the two hundredth anniversary of his birth in 2020.

Manchester Histories commissioned artist Liz Wewiora, a socially engaged photographer to work on the project with community groups in Angel Meadow, Collyhurst and Harpurhey. The No. 93 Wellbeing Centre (formerly Harpurhey Wellbeing Centre), part of Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust, was also one of the community partners for the project and Liz joined their weekly walking club, where residents met to walk around Queens Park for health and wellbeing.

Through the Covid safe history walks, on-line talks by historian Jonathan Scofield and on-line creative photography activity with community groups a series of photography led stories about the local area were produced. All the stories and the photographs of the River Irk are now being curated to be revealed as part of series of public exhibitions in Spring/Summer 2021. Despite the pandemic, the project still managed to engage with over 300 people from across Greater Manchester.

## **Manchester International Festival**

Since lockdown MIF has been playing an active and open role in Greater Manchester, providing active support and employment for artists and freelancers. Early on in the crisis they offered daily drop-ins with the festival's Artistic Director and Creative Director for independent artists and freelancers to share information and receive advice and support.

They actively contributed to the new GM Artist Hub, providing bespoke information and advice to artists and continue to support Greater Manchester artists and freelancers and communities through creative opportunities and moving projects into the digital space.

In response to the Black Lives Matter movement across the World, the MIF Young People's Forum, a collective of individuals from Greater Manchester aged between 16 and 28, came together in July to host A Conversation for Change, exploring how to effect change within the arts sector in Manchester. Over 50 representatives of Greater Manchester's cultural organisations attended the event and participated in an anonymous survey to help inform development of a creative manifesto which the Young People's Forum will soon be sharing widely with the sector.

Throughout the pandemic they continued to commission and present creative work, employing new models and partnerships to adapt to the moment. Together in One Voice saw a one-off, city-wide, spirits-lifting, socially-distanced community singalong in May 2020, closely followed by the Factory's first one million visitors engaging with the first commission for Virtual Factory via the global gaming platform Fortnite Creative, and the release of Riz Ahmed's livestream edition of The Long Goodbye in January '21. They also continued to commission creative engagement and learning including, for example, working with artist Tina Finch to support a Creative Young Carers scheme for 50 young carers in partnership with Bolton Lads and Girls Club and with Wigan & Leigh Young Carers Group,

expanding MIF's popular Have a Word project, which welcomes GM residents to join in free online conversations on the third Wednesday of every month, and sustaining it as a valuable, consistent space for attendees to connect, keep talking and to share experiences of the pandemic with others across the city; and recruiting a new team of Neighbourhood Organisers to deepen connections across Manchester, Rochdale, Salford and Tameside.

They collaborated with Curious Minds and sector skills Council, Creative & Cultural Skills to get 58 Kickstart roles approved for GM Arts and Culture organisations; and developed Kickstart Creative – new wrap around support training to support employers and people in Kickstart roles. A new Factory Futures Programme launched, responding directly to the rising levels of youth unemployment and aims to reengage and build confidence/prepare people for entry roles in the creative sector. 29 people completed DWP approved Factory Futures programme with a BTEC in workskills, and 30 more are starting a training academy for Broadcast & Film. They developed a partnership with The Growth Company to support up to 200 employers in the sector with productivity plans and individual skills plans, and started market engagement around a new employer led training body for GM – The Creative Industries Training Alliance.

## **Manchester Jazz Festival**

The impact of the outbreak of Covid-19 on Manchester Jazz Festival was immediate and profound, not least as the 2020 edition of the festival, which was scheduled to take place between 21 May 2020 - 25 May 2020, had to be cancelled as a live event with less than eight weeks notice. Despite these challenges, Manchester Jazz Festival has been able to deliver significant activity over the last year, producing the 2020 festival as a four-day online experience, and pivoting two talent development programmes - Hothouse and Soundcheck - to online delivery.

MJF2020: Jazz Unlocked took place as a fully digital event between 21 May 2020 - 24 May 2020 and provided audiences and artists with a distinctive engagement experience during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was produced in partnership with Jazz North and United We Stream. In addition to specially-created content recorded by artists from remote locations, it presented a programme of socially distanced ensemble performances streamed from the Bury Met Theatre, the first jazz performances of this type in the UK during the 13-week lockdown that started on 23 March 2020. In a virtual landscape quickly populated with online content of variable quality, Jazz Unlocked reflected the organisation's vision and its ambitions for high quality and diversity.

Both MJF Talent Development programmes were redesigned over the summer to enable them to be delivered online. The fifth round of Hothouse, their groundbreaking talent development programme for musicians in the North of England, was relaunched this January. Hothouse: Level Up trials a new model for supporting artists in their next steps while live performances are not possible, focusing instead on funding for artists, skills development in bid writing/planning, and increased international industry relationship development.

Soundcheck, the festival's new talent development programme for 18-25 year olds living in Greater Manchester, launched this February, also as an online programme. Programme components have included workshops, mentoring and peer-to-peer leaning. The nine

participants are drawn from across the GM boroughs; they will conclude their time on Soundcheck this March with an online sharing of music they've developed while on the programme.

## Manchester Jewish Museum

Despite the challenges of this year, Manchester Jewish Museum's £6m capital project has progressed well and the building will finally be completed in April. The new museum will be twice the size as before, with a new gallery, learning studio & kitchen, café and shop. The museum's historic synagogue has also been fully repaired and refurbished, with its original 19<sup>th</sup> century decorative scheme reinstated. The museum is planning to re-open to the public this summer. Over the past year, due to Covid restrictions, the museum had to adapt its programming to keep engaging with its audiences and to continue supporting artists, volunteers, local schools and community partners. The museum has continued working with artists as they activated the archives through music, drag, food, theatre and art as they question what are the stories we need to hear right now. Museum events in 2020 included a high-camp drag quiz night with cabaret artist Chanukah Lewinsky; intimate conversations with female music artists on the frontline of the UK Jewish music scene; young activists' responses to keeping past stories alive for Holocaust Memorial Day; and a culinary taste journey through their collection with Theatre Chef Leo Burtin.

## Manchester Literature Festival

GMCA funding enabled Manchester Literature Festival to expand its Little Reads project for children aged 2 - 6 and their families. Sessions involve reading, creating stories, imaginative thinking, creative play, craftwork, singing and dancing. They are fully inclusive and aimed at developing important foundation skills; encouraging parents/carers to engage with their children's learning and foster a love of reading and learning in preparation for starting school. During the first Covid national lockdown they broadcasted 4 Little Reads videos via the MLF You Tube channel attracting 6300 views. In October 2020 they started delivering live interactive Little Read sessions via zoom. Working in partnership with 10 GM libraries (Stockport Hazel Grove, Stockport Brinnington, Moss Side & Hulme, Salford Broughton, Salford Pendleton, Levenshulme, Longsight, Old Trafford, Stretford and Manchester Central) they have been able to target these sessions at some of the families most impacted by the pandemic. The sessions are delivered by a diverse team of freelance storytellers including Carla Henry, Debbie Bandara and Hyacinthe Brindley, who was originally a volunteer at Little Reads Levenshulme. 380 families have engaged with Little Reads since October 2020 of which 39% identify as BAME. They have had lots of positive feedback from families about how much they have been enjoying the Little Reads sessions and how they are helping them feel less socially isolated:

*'The zoom class was lovely & wonderful. Coco is really struggling with home schooling due to the lack of connection with other children, so the session [today](#) was perfectly timed - beautifully balanced, inclusive and the lady reading was great at bringing all the children into the stories - which was melodic, engaging and just wonderful. So lovely to see another mummy we had previously lost contact with having met in the library too! We cannot thank you and your charity enough!'* Coco and mummy (Little Reads participants).



GMCA funding has also contributed to MLF's core costs this year enabling us to produce a scaled down, digital iteration of the Festival in October 2020. #MLF20 comprised 17 events featuring high profile authors, poets, artists and activists from across the globe, including conversations with Tori Amos, Angela Davis, Nick Hornby, Maaza Mengiste and Kae Tempest. It attracted an audience of 5000 people from 53 countries. They had many heartfelt messages of thanks from audience members:

*'You cannot underestimate the importance of the festival and its impact on my mental health and wellbeing. This is true every year but this time it is even more significant and poignant. It's like getting a hug from a good friend'*

## Manchester Pride

Due to the impacts of the pandemic, Manchester Pride rapidly adapted its usual physical event output to a digital delivery plan. This included turning around a physical conference and executing a full digital offering within a week as lockdown measures were announced in March 2020. They also delivered the Alternative Manchester Pride Festival in August 2020 which consisted of an extensive programme of virtual events and cultural output across three days ranging from a 12 hour stream of high-quality programming, in partnership with United we Stream, to digital yoga classes and bake-a-longs to holding a virtual Candlelit Vigil, so they could ensure all LGBTQ+ communities were still able to celebrate Pride at home.

With regards to Superbia, Manchester Pride's year-round arts and culture programme for and by LGBTQ+ people, they were able to re-strategise delivery to be fully digital including a weekly online Superbia Spotlight series showcasing LGBTQ+ artists and creatives from across Greater Manchester, in partnership with Manchester Finest. Through this partnership, they were able to showcase over 30 LGBTQ+ artists from Greater Manchester and provide new opportunities. They were able to offer 10 commissions to LGBTQ+ artists and creatives from across the entire LGBTQ+ spectrum, QTPOC, older LGBTQ+ artists and young LGBTQ+ creatives. The commissions enabled artists to develop new digital work and provided one-to-one mentorship to ensure they were supported in adapting their creative practices for the online world we now found ourselves in. In addition to the commissions, they were able to provide larger grants to independent LGBTQ+ arts organisations and artist collectives to ensure they were able to continue delivering vital opportunities for LGBTQ+ artists and creatives across Greater Manchester. This included supporting Transcreative to deliver a mentorship programme for Trans artists and their first digital festival, supporting textile artist Sarah-Joy Ford in creating an online space for her exhibitions and enabling the QTPOC artist collective Plan B to continue exploring their creative practice and to develop new work. 100% of the artists Superbia worked with in 2020 stated that Superbia had helped them grow and develop their artistic/creative practice and provided significant support during the pandemic. Feedback from artists included;

"The Superbia grant gave me a boost of energy and something to pour my creative thoughts into. The commission motivated me to produce new work after a long period of feeling creatively stifled as a result of the pandemic."

"The Superbia commission supported our practice during this critical moment in the pandemic. This commission enabled us to continue our drive to discover stories and make ground breaking work about our own hyper-local heritage and share those stories with the community in which they have been created."

“As an all LGBTQ+ co-op, it has been wonderful to be supported by an organisation that understands and celebrates us.”

“Having my work platformed by an organisation like Superbia was a big boost to my confidence as a young artist. It was a highlight of the year and something good to remember about 2020.”

## Music Action International

Creative sessions with refugee torture survivors collective Stone Flowers took place online from April 2020 and 3 original songs were written via Zoom and shared at interactive events in partnership with Migration Matters, Refugee Week and Imperial War Museums. Stone Flowers are now creating a new music video via Zoom with Liva Vision, to accompany the song written about the pandemic "The Rush is on Pause" to be released in June 2021.

Online sessions with a mother & baby group of asylum seekers who have survived war in their home country will begin in partnership with Rainbow Haven with Manchester and Salford residents. Music Action International also hope to begin face-to-face with teenage asylum seekers in May, working towards releasing an EP with high-profile artists of refugee heritage in September. Schools sessions are on hold for now, but are promoting online resources for teachers to use in the classroom/online.

## Octagon, Bolton

The Octagon was due to re-open after a £12m redevelopment in July 2020. Instead, Covid delayed completion of construction and has created difficult conditions to complete the fit-out and preparations for re-opening. The building will be ready to open when restrictions ease later in 2021. Their Creative Engagement work has continued throughout the pandemic with nearly 4,000 participations in online activity ranging from a virtual summer school for young people to an online theatre club for over 55s. They also participated in the GM Creative Care Packs for young people and older people. They joined local and national partners to support the freelance community including the GM Artists Hub, and offered a number of commissions and incubations for new work. They created a range of digital productions including work for young people, a zoom production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and they are currently a partner in a new online production of *A Picture of Dorian Gray*. In May 2020 they launched Future Fund to support the Octagon's survival and future success. Through public and charitable donations they have so far raised nearly £600k of support with donations coming from across the world. Bolton has endured the longest restrictions in the North, and the reimaged, re-opened Octagon is now ready to play a vital role in the borough's recovery – bringing people safely together, bringing visitors to the town centre, and creating new opportunities for cultural experiences.

# Old Courts, Wigan

In response to forced closure of premises and with commitment to the arts in mind, the organisation launched 'The Old Courts Live' in May along with several other bespoke projects designed to adapt what they do to fit with this incredibly difficult year.

Thanks to Greater Manchester Combined Authority they were able to launch **The Old Courts Live** which is a brand-new online performance platform and has allowed the organisation to continue supporting artists with paid work whilst offering much needed entertainment to audiences who are isolated at home.

Aside from a boost to the mental health of audience and performers this activity brings, they have paid over 400 freelance artists at a time when their work was virtually non-existent. To date, these online events have been viewed over 70,000 times online.

Old Courts has also provided free-to-attend virtual workshops delivered by paid artists to offer deeper engagement for individuals desperate for creativity amid the monotony of lockdown and have just completed a **self-published book** of new pieces of creative writing and imagery submitted by the general public. The book features 109 local contributors and aim to support them all with further opportunities to develop their skills and interests.

In December they toured a surprise mini panto on the back of a truck around Wigan and Leigh to 8 locations. The response was phenomenal and they had over 500 people watch the shows outdoors in a safe and socially-distanced manner. The Tour focussed on the most challenging areas of Wigan borough with historically had very low levels of engagement, and for a number of Children this was the first time that they had seen any live performance outside of School if at all.

As well as the artistic programme, they have been supporting local freelance artists to access funding opportunities and commissions. They created and launched an online artist information portal to highlight current available opportunities and the development team have been on hand to help with bid writing and networking.

In January 2021 they made a donation to The Boulevard, a Grass Roots music venue in Wigan which had been added to the Music Venue Trusts at severe risk of closure list. Through donation and support the Venue has now been taken off the list ensuring another critical part of the cultural infrastructure remains viable for the future.

Due to a shared feeling of responsibility, the Old Courts closed their doors to the public over a week before hospitality was forced to close and the furlough scheme was introduced. They contacted Wigan Council to offer their services and ended up coordinating volunteers covering various areas of Wigan.

Working alongside friends at Fur Clemt who provided the food, they delivered over 700 essential packages, and help to distribute GMCA Arts packs across the borough as well as making also made over 1000 welfare calls to lonely and isolated residents with a 100 strong volunteer team. The Old Courts also teamed up with Fur Clemt and Wigan. Eat. Drink to provide 10,000 packed lunches to those in need during October half term. More recently they teamed up with Daffodil Dreams to help them with their Clothes Poverty project by organising the collection of clothes donations from around Wigan.

# Oldham Coliseum

Oldham Coliseum has maintained – and extended – their artistic output during the pandemic, moving some projects online and acquiring new digital skills.

During lockdown they added a number of digital opportunities to their repertoire. The Coliseum's associate artist Hafsah Aneela Bashir created the Poetry Health Service in partnership with HOME, Manchester. This creative service, in which users are gifted a complimentary poem, offers both contemporary and classical poetry as a tool for connection and healing. It embodies and champions the importance of art in supporting mental and emotional health and is still accessible from the Coliseum website.

With Oldham subject to additional restrictions, the Coliseum was unable to re-open. Without their planned Christmas activity, they commissioned a series of short Advent plays (filmed under Covid-safe conditions at the Coliseum) which ran until December 24th. They also provided a digital panto option for people to watch at home, delivering two simultaneous panto-inspired performances to multiple schools.

The Coliseum continues to plan for a new season themed around 'Adventure', encouraging new audience experiences and different forms of engagement. They are working with Riptide theatre (Leeds), SBC Theatre, Front Room Productions and Bradford Producing Hub amongst others. They recently released three micro-commissions for open submission, each for an 'at home' experience and worth £1,000 per commission.

They are currently working on a series of films commissioned by Oldham Council for Hate Crime Awareness week and hope to develop this area of partnership with the local Council. They have maintained support for the Oldham community through Learning & Development activity, moving work online whilst unable to meet in person. This includes delivering a programme for young people with the Prince's Trust, meeting with the Full Circle over-50s group via Zoom and maintaining social contact by offering coffee and chat by phone for those who are most at risk of isolation.

# People's History Museum

PHM has delivered a brilliant programme of engagement activities for diverse audiences – Ideas Worth Exploring: at home and online – including learning resources for young people, a new 3D tour of the museum, family friendly activities, collections highlights and online exhibitions. This has secured work for the museum's freelance team of artists, musicians and story-tellers who have delivered online and connected the museum's story with current events including the pandemic, black lives matter protests and climate crisis. PHM opened for 2 months in 2020 and was delighted to welcome visitors back in a covid-secure way to enjoy its collections and exhibits, receiving lots of positive feedback. The museum has also used digital channels to diversify income, launching an online shop and a successful crowdfunding campaign and looks forward to opening in 2021 working in partnership with a new local and ethical café provider.

## Quays Culture

Quays Culture created a new travelling light installation called 'Mystery Bird' in response to the COVID19 Pandemic. The work was made to travel to people's homes and visited 22 locations across GM and was viewed by over 4,500 people on its four day tour in December. 'Mystery Bird' consisted of a huge birdcage on the back of a flatbed truck, filled with 360 degree projected birds accompanied by a bespoke soundscape. The birds were seemingly 'released' from the cage and flew free across buildings, trees and the streets of Greater Manchester. Inspired by the public's increase awareness of nature during the first lockdown it was devised by Creative Programme Producers, Jude Jagger and Gemma Saunders and realised by a collaboration of 5 artists: Helen Musselwhite (paper artist), Illuminos (projection artists), Jason Singh (sound artist), M3 Industries (designer fabricators) and Jack Hardiker (digital and AR artist). 650 Creative Packs were door-dropped to residents and a new Instagram filter was downloaded 8100 times .

## Royal Exchange Theatre

Royal Exchange Theatre is committed to being an accessible civic space for Greater Manchester. Staying present in the lives of artists, audiences and participants in this exceptional year was vital and helped to drive a vibrant programme of work that kept communities connected.

As an initial step REX moved online creating pathways for their Elders Company, Children's Company, Young Company, Local Exchange Ambassadors and audiences to remain attached to the theatre. All of these groups received support to access online workshops, ensuring people could join any activity. The Elders Company thrived, sessions helped to build confidence and increases feelings of being connected. This activity resulted in projects such as PHONE A FRIEND (for those who could not get online) and an original documentary film A FUNNY THING HAPPENED IN ISOLATION. Since April 2020 the Elders have met every day over zoom for coffee (including Christmas Day!). Local Exchange Ambassadors from Cheetham Hill, Tameside and Leigh joined forces with writer Chris Thorpe to create a celebratory spoken-word film called KEEP IT IN THE DAY which was shared online and by the website I Love Manchester. The Young Company continued their regular sessions online, creating new work such as CONNECT FEST (an intergenerational online soap-opera), MMXX and MOMENTS OF CONNECTION which brought young people together with professional actors and directors, supporting both additional learning opportunities and freelance artists. Nine original pieces of work were made with actors including Julie Hesmondhalgh and Geraldine Somerville supporting this work.

They celebrated plays by releasing recordings of THE ALMIGHTY SOMETIMES and THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA for free. ROCKETS AND BLUE LIGHTS, which closed after two performances, was recorded as part of BBC Arts Culture in Quarantine and aired on Radio 3. In response to Black Lives Matter Artistic Director Roy Alexander Weise created a digital reading of Katori Hall's powerful play THE MOUNTAINTOP was streamed for free. At Christmas they wanted to celebrate Manchester and its people, so commissioned six writers, including Russell T Davies, to make short plays for an advent calendar.

This project brought to together a collective of over 40 artists from sound designers to actors to community performers. ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS was viewed over 117K times across all digital platforms. Most recently they have commissioned six Greater Manchester artists to help us celebrate international women's day, working with Jigsaw Homes they created free art packs which will be delivered to over 650 residents in Dukinfield Estate, Cavendish Mill and via the Tameside Women's Centre.

## **Sheba Arts**

Due to the lockdown, Sheba Arts repurposed funding and moved online. Using this fund, they held a digital festival in August 2020 and provided four commissions of £300 to artists from refugee and migrant communities to create a new piece of work responding to the pandemic, the black lives movement, and the refugee crisis. Their work was showcased as part of the festival and attracted 5k audiences. Additionally, they held five seminars with 18 guest speakers from across the country to discuss diversity in the arts and future perspectives.

## **The Turnpike**

With no firm understanding of when their building could re-open, the Leigh gallery decided in March to suspend its exhibition programme and instead became an artist-led testing ground; commissioning artists to explore and develop impactful, responsive, socially engaged practice with local communities. The Turnpike has therefore become a catalyst for community co-creation, with artists working closely with the community to create ideas for a positive future, supporting local people to develop skills, bonds & confidence that will support their resilience through the recovery. For the next 18 months, they have commissioned a series of 'Activations', ambitious socially-engaged commissions that are made by artists through a process of deep engagement with communities & groups in the town. Exploring central themes of climate change, social resilience, environmental justice & diversity, projects have been commissioned from NW-based but internationally-practicing artists who have made meaningful connection with communities, green spaces and the town. Activations, creates a significant shift in the Turnpike's organisational development and programming: an entirely new artistic offer, that builds on learning from previous work. They have imbedded a new dynamic way of working that does not rely on exhibition-based models alone but embraces the full range of how artists might bring their practices to Leigh.

They have continued their Community, Learning and Engagement programme developing a blended offer of digital, face-to-face and home delivered activities, talks and resources. Within strict safety guidelines, The Turnpike have continued to deploy artists into schools and during a temporary reopening of their space in October, they successfully offered a cultural education programme engaging pupils entering into Year 7 during the pandemic, supporting them with safe, socially distanced, fun and creative artist-led workshops. With support from GMCA they recruited the first cohort of artists for The Making of Us – a new professional development programme supporting 15 mid-career socially engaged artists who live and work in Greater Manchester.

## **Walk The Plank**

Walk the Plank have continued to deliver work across Greater Manchester during lockdown including Begin the World Over Again – a podcasting project in partnership with the Working Class Movement Library, and Digital Diwali.

The podcast achieved almost 1000 downloads and connected to training and activity for young people in Salford, including a youth panel.

Diwali celebrations included online storytelling, 550 mail-out lantern making kits, live broadcasts of dance and fire drawing. The project connected a huge range of Hindu organisations both in Greater Manchester and India creating an international reach online and laying foundations for a digital activity around the festival for the future. The numerous digital elements of the programme (<https://digitaldiwali.co.uk/>) reached 8257 people in 47 countries, with the highest levels of engagement being recorded in the UK (1,798), and India (4,986). With further engagement through our community and creative partner's platforms, of 38,241.

## **Wigan STEAM CIC**

Despite Wigan STEAM's physical premises being closed for the majority of the time, they have engaged with over 8000 people in some way over the last year - delivering in-person workshops when permitted (which engaged 37 young people), Facebook live sessions, Zoom sessions, delivered projects with artists, created an online exhibition (which had 500 visitors), and even managed to produce one physical exhibition in its gallery (which had 730 visitors).

The pandemic has proved just how important Wigan STEAM's work is for young people in particular. Based on feedback from parents many of the young people they work with have been struggling with their mental health, and fortnightly Young Makers sessions have been an important resource for them to socialise and be creative in a relaxed space. Young Makers has been described by parents as a 'lifeline', and a 'highlight' of the young people's weeks. One Young Makers' parents said: "I can't tell you how much Josh looks forward to the sessions and seeing him smile like this makes my heart sing. Can't tell you the impact Young Makers has had on his life. Thank you all so much for what you do." From January 2021 they decided to double the intake of Young Makers and establish a new digital arts group in order for us to increase impact and support more young people.

Wigan STEAM has also put a lot of work into providing artists with paid opportunities over the last year. Their residency programme, which will support eight artists/collectives with paid development opportunities, launched in late 2020 and will continue through to Spring 2022. Although the gallery has been closed and in-person workshops haven't been possible, the artists have continued to work on their projects and have engaged with people over the internet. They've also supported other artists in the area and have delivered 30 artist-led workshops over the last year - with most of these sessions being delivered via Zoom.

## **Z-Arts**

Z-arts transferred all workshops for children online back in March 2020, quickly honing them to the most effective interactive methods of engagement. They have engaged thousands of families online through these activities, with Make & Believe Family activities and Yoga being most popular. They've posted arts packs across GM for children and young people, and developed relationships with food banks to deliver arts packs and activities to families in

need. They've offered laptops, notebooks and data packages to families so they can access online activities.

Their Band Of Boroughs was due to begin in December 2020 but has been delayed until April 2021. 'Music outreach project Band Of Boroughs will reach over 100 children across 5 different boroughs of Greater Manchester (including Manchester, Tameside, Stockport, Salford and Oldham). Weekly sessions with music industry professionals and facilitators will lead up to performances, masterclasses and sharing opportunities across 10 months. This will lead to happier, more confident and more musically active children in areas where music making opportunities are at their lowest.'

In February half-term Z-Arts hosted a Big Imaginations Storytelling Festival online, reaching audiences across the NW region, with partners broadcasting 23 performances including from Manchester, Oldham, Trafford, Wigan, Rochdale and Tameside.

As a key member of the GM Artists Hub they have been supporting artists, as well as specifically supporting artists making work for young audiences, including Art With Heart, Elayne Ogbeta and Proud & Loud in Salford, Chad Taylor, Darren Pritchard, Louise Wallwein, Ros Norford, Hawk Dance, Emmanuella and Company in Manchester, and Ria Moorthy in Tameside.