



# Annual Report 2018/19



**STUFF @ Birmingham Repertory Theatre – October 2018**  
Photographer: Graeme Braidwood

*'The play perfectly balances light and dark, matching its easy humour by showing an understanding of and respect for hoarding and those who are trying to escape it...Connolly is a sparkling wit and Crouch's puppetry is a wonder, together they are a delight to watch.'*  
- Daily Spectacle (4star)

*"Funny, moving, intelligent, and sensitively handled exploration of a hugely misunderstood and emotive subject. I would say grab a ticket, but they've sold out for the run!"*  
- Audience Tweet

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## Highlights and Acknowledgements

Women & Theatre have had a successful year delivering a vast array of projects, performances and workshops, which have engaged people of all ages and backgrounds, in settings that include theatres, hospitals, community centres, outdoor spaces and conference venues.

Particular highlights include our production of '**STUFF**' which used puppetry and object theatre to shine a light on the subject of hoarding. Developed from research and produced in association with Birmingham Repertory Theatre, this quirky and comedic production reached over 700 people during its sell-out run in October 2018. Devised and performed by W&T's Artistic Director, Janice Connolly, and puppeteer, Michael Crouch, **STUFF** received 4 star reviews and brilliant audience feedback. An integral part of the production was the accompanying post-show discussion which over 75% of audiences returned for – wanting to discuss the subject matter and share personal stories.

Another highlight was launching **Word Lounge Theatre Company**, a 2-year pilot project for Looked After Young People, Young Carers and Young People with Additional Educational Needs. Delivered in partnership, WLTC took place at a different venue each term, with weekly sessions culminating in new productions reflecting young people's creative ideas. In Summer 2018, WLTC developed a musical theatre piece *Broken Town* for the Hippodrome's *Summer in Southside* Festival; Autumn 2018 saw the creation of *Hurricane* – their take on *Wizard of Oz* at The REP; and a collaboration with Autin Dance Theatre at MAC during Spring 2019 produced a movement piece called *Bounce*. In all cases, the content of productions came from the young people who developed wide-ranging theatre skills and made significant progress in their team working skills, self-belief and overall wellbeing.

We have also produced high quality and uplifting community productions this year. We worked with Friends of Longbridge Open Spaces (FLOS) to create an outdoor musical production called **Women of Longbridge**. Rooted in the voices and experiences of real women, the production included scenes based in the Austin car factory, songs about protest and scenes about the rebuilding of Longbridge. The performance reached over 250 audience members over 3 shows on Saturday 23 June 2018. We also achieved high levels of engagement during our development process with 175 local women of different ages engaged as participants in outreach sessions, singing workshops or members of the community cast. Led by W&T's Lead Artist Practitioner, Jo Gleave, working with writer, Hannah Graham, and Music Artist, Gladstone Wilson, **Women of Longbridge** was very successful, allowing local women to share stories and help create a theatre production in the heart of their community.

In addition to creating new work, we were thrilled to extend the reach of existing productions like **Phyllis** which presents the story of a woman and her family navigating the complex system of older people's care. Commissioners included Coventry and Warwickshire STP, Newton Europe, Birmingham City Council, Witton Lodge Community Association and several Healthwatch organisations. **Phyllis** continues to make a significant impact wherever it is performed; attracting strong feedback, stimulating discussions and affecting positive change.

W&T has seen some personnel changes this year. After five fabulous years, we said goodbye to our Project Manager, Rachel Snape. Rachel made a massive contribution to the company during her time with us and will be missed. Rachel has been replaced by another wonderful woman, Rosie Gunn, who joined us in December 2018, bringing a range of skills and connections to the company. We also want to give massive thanks to Alison Finn, who stood down as Chair at our last AGM. Alison has been a strong and supportive Chair and we are pleased that she will remain a Board member, benefiting W&T with her energy and expertise. We are delighted to have appointed Ellie Griffiths as our new Chair, and also welcomed 2 new Board members, Rebecca Phillips and Alice Tomlinson.

We are feeling positive for the year ahead and would like to thank our board and all the core staff, freelance artists, students, volunteers, and partner organisations who have worked with the company. Thanks for the hard work, the laughs, the great ideas, the compassion and the energy.

## Company Mission Statement

Women & Theatre creates high quality productions and participatory projects of contemporary relevance.

In particular we aim to:

- Reflect the language and lives of ordinary people
- Raise awareness of urgent social issues affecting people's wellbeing in contemporary society
- Influence agendas and affect change
- Recognise and represent diverse experiences
- Tour to traditional and non-traditional venues

Women & Theatre promote the spiritual, social, physical and mental well being of the whole community using theatre and interactive drama. In particular we:

- Encourage social inclusion in health, education and the wider community
- Develop the work through research in partnership with key organisations and communities
- Facilitate programmes in appropriate contexts
- Work in partnership, to overcome barriers to access, such as language, disability, child care and ability to pay

Women & Theatre strives to be an equal opportunities employer. In addition we:

- Are committed to continuous professional development
- Recognise, encourage and promote women as theatre practitioners
- Encourage and support Birmingham and regional theatre practitioners

Women & Theatre is a member of the ITC. The Company is governed by a Board of Directors.

## Company Artistic Policy

Women & Theatre's artistic policy has matured over the last 35 years but remains firmly rooted in the original remit of creating accessible new work that represents the language and lives of ordinary people.

We promote the health of different communities through participatory activity and performances which highlight issues affecting people's wellbeing in contemporary society, with a view to affecting change. Performances and participatory projects are delivered in community settings, at training events & conferences, in schools & colleges, theatres & arts centres.

The Company is not afraid to tackle core issues about the human condition, encouraging reflection and change. Reactive to cultural and societal changes and focussing upon the human stories behind different subject matter, we produce work buzzing with the energy of people's experience.

Women & Theatre has pioneered a collaborative process for devising scripts from in depth research. This process is both respectful and participatory. We work in partnership with communities and share stories. The work evolves from the ongoing interaction from audience to artist to audience, enhanced by the provision of facilitated post-show discussions at some performances.

The artists we work with are not only skilled in their art form but also display social awareness and personal integrity. We nurture relationships with performers and actively recruit and train new, less experienced workers to grow with us. We work in a flexible, family friendly way and make provision for artists who are also parents to continue to work and develop their skills. We prioritise and promote the work of regional artists and are committed to diversity in our writing and casting.

Women & Theatre's work is hallmarked by its distinctive style and the quality of the art that we produce. Our work is both funny and moving because it connects with people's experience. We harness the impact and magic of live theatre by incorporating song, original music, film, physical theatre, improvisation and high production values. By dramatizing subjects at the cutting edge of people's consciousness we create challenging uplifting theatre that people want to see.

## Artistic Activities 2018/19

In the 12 months from April 2018 to March 2019, W&T delivered a wide range of projects and productions. We delivered a total of **182** practical sessions - in the form of performances, participatory workshops or training sessions. The total number of attendances was **3927**.

The following are some examples of our work throughout the year:

### NEW THEATRE:

#### **STUFF**

W&T developed a quirky and comedic production about hoarding. Written & performed by Janice Connolly & puppeteer Michael Crouch, **STUFF** premiered at Birmingham Repertory Theatre in October 2018. Created through research interviews with self-identified hoarders & relevant professionals, **STUFF** combined puppetry & object theatre to explore place, time, memory and our attachment to things.

**STUFF** was produced in association with The REP & supported by Arts Council England and Cole Charitable Trust. The process saw Janice & Michael work with a wonderful team including Director Daniel Bailey, Assistant Director Jack Mahon, Lighting Designer Jack Weir, Sound Designer Clive Meldrum, Stage Manager Amber Curtis and Voice Coach Stephen Kemble.

The production reached 701 people during a sell-out run at The REP and engaged wider numbers who saw filmed footage online and via Cloud's End's Hoarding support groups. The play depicts a woman called Anna, played by Janice, who finds herself trapped between the companionship of objects and the tyranny of 'stuff'. The use of puppetry was very engaging, with Michael animating objects that took on different roles & personas. **STUFF** and the accompanying discussion went beyond the tabloid headlines and reality TV show sensationalism to deepen our understanding of this complex subject matter in a way only theatre can.



#### **Women of Longbridge**

W&T and Friends of Longbridge Open Spaces worked in partnership with different groups of women in Longbridge to create a new musical theatre production. We achieved high levels of engagement during our development process, good audience numbers on the day and also strong online audiences via the project's podcast. A key achievement was the number and range of women involved in our creative process; with 175 local women involved in outreach sessions, singing workshops or the community cast. We worked with Austin Social Club, Frankley Library, Longbridge Methodist Church, Meadow Rose Nursing Home, Extracare Retirement Village, The Factory Young People's Centre and Bournville College.



Rooted in the experiences of real women, the production included scenes based in the Austin car factory, songs about protest and scenes about the rebuilding of Longbridge. The show was wonderful, helped in no small part by the glorious sunshine. We had over 250 audience members over 3 shows on Saturday 23 June 2018. We also secured strong online audiences via a project podcast.

**Women of Longbridge** was very successful, allowing local women to share stories and create a new production in the heart of their community. It was funded by Arts Council England, Birmingham City Council, The Feeny Trust, The Grimmitt Trust, The Cole Charitable Trust and the Harry Payne Fund.

## YOUNG PEOPLE:

### **Word Lounge Theatre Company**

W&T successfully launched its **Word Lounge Theatre Company** for disadvantaged young people and have delivered the first year of a 2-year pilot.

We delivered 3 terms of weekly sessions culminating in new productions at Birmingham Hippodrome, The REP & MAC. Working at different venues allowed young people to experience different ways of working, and each term saw WLTC devising new work inspired by an aspect of the host venue's artistic programme. In Summer 2018, they developed a musical piece 'Broken Town' for the Hippodrome's *Summer in Southside* Festival. Autumn saw the group create 'Hurricane' – their take on 'Wizard of Oz' which was on at The REP. It celebrated the ways we can affect positive changes in our lives. Spring 2019 involved working at MAC with Autin Dance Theatre, to create 'Bounce' - a piece using movement and photography to explore confidence and teamwork.

Across the year, young people devised scripts, song lyrics, melodies, designed costumes and created movement, and developed wide-ranging social and practical skills. We have also seen significant progress in their team working skills, self-belief and overall wellbeing. We are grateful to our funders; Children in Need, Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation, Eveson Charitable Trust, Grantham Yorke Charitable Trust, the Field Family Trust and Baron Davenport's Charity.

***"Everyone all included there's no one out and I don't feel like have to fit in, I feel like I can just be myself... this here is like a definition of diversity, at its finest."*** - Participant comment

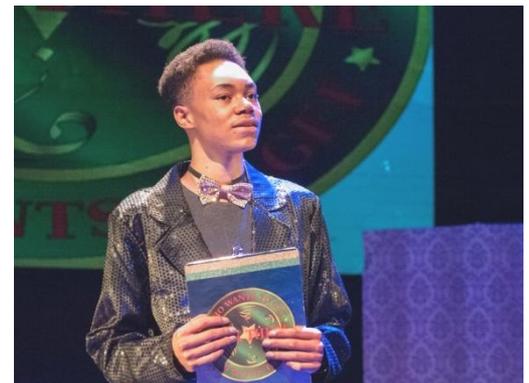
### **Factory Theatre Company**

W&T worked in partnership with The Factory Young People's Centre to recruit a young leaders group of 4 young people aged 16-25, that were NEET (not in education, employment or training). Over 4 months, the group designed, planned & delivered a youth theatre programme for younger people aged 12-16 to participate in during February Half Term 2019.

The Young Leaders were supported to successfully organise the Half term project, and promote the programme and performance locally. They learnt new skills in drama facilitation and devising a performance and were able to put these into practice in the week, helping to plan the days and schedule activities. Sessions also included some work towards obtaining a silver arts award which 3 of the group completed and passed.

During the half term programme, the Young Leaders' worked alongside Jo Gleave, Jessica Hakin and Liam Walsh to lead the younger participants to create their own performance. The script for *The things I've seen* was written by the participants and used comedy, movement and poetry to tell the story of a neighbourhood of isolated individuals and those preoccupied with their own lives, who through the intervention of one individual, come together as a community to oppose the destruction of an apparently condemned tree – a focal point in the area associated with many memories. The performance was wonderful and received a great reaction from family and friends.

The project was funded by Birmingham City Council, Norton Foundation and Arts Award Access Fund.



## HEALTH:

### Phyllis

Developed from research with patients, family members and health & social care professionals, *Phyllis* highlights the need for seamless cross-organisational partnerships, to work better together for the best interests of our populations.



Originally commissioned by Birmingham & Solihull Sustainability & Transformational Partnership in 2017, *Phyllis* has attracted bookings from several organisations nationally. In autumn 2018, we were commissioned by Coventry and Warwickshire STP to tour ‘*Phyllis*’ across Warwickshire, engaging health and social care professionals, and also performed for Newton Europe and at Healthwatch’s National Conference. Spring 2019 then saw further bookings for local Healthwatch organisations in the south and performances for Birmingham City Council and Witton Lodge Community Association.

*Phyllis* was performed by Janice Connolly, Alison Belbin, Laurence Saunders and Adaya Henry. It was presented to health and social care professionals, followed by a discussion about the issues raised with groups collectively identifying improvements to systems to better the experience for patients, families and health professionals alike. *Phyllis* continues to make a strong impact and attract positive feedback wherever it is presented.

***“Powerful performance with time to reflect on my own professional actions and role”***  
– *Phyllis* Audience Member

### Partnership with Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Foundation NHS Trust

W&T had another successful year of partnership activity BSMHFT. We delivered courses of drama workshops with service users in in-patient settings – including at Ashcroft, Longbridge Health Centre, Osborn House and the mental health ward of HMP Birmingham. Delivery artists included Alison Belbin, Adaya Henry, Jay Crutchley, Julie Baker, Jo Gleave, Emma Fall, and Francesca Millican Slater.

We were also commissioned by BSMHFT’s LGBT Network to create a new monologues-based production about the experiences of older LGBT people. ***Looking Back, Moving Forwards*** was developed from research by Hannah Graham and Janice Connolly and was performed twice at the Trust’s LGBT Celebration event on 14 February 2019, by Janice, Bharti Patel & Richard Curnow.

### Permission to be Nosey – Health Visitor Monologues



Birmingham City University commissioned us to present our Health Visitor Monologues, *Permission to be Nosey*, on 31 January 2019, for their newly qualified cohort of Health Visitors.

Originally commissioned in 2013 by Birmingham East & North PCT, Janice did some research to create new pieces and update the script to reflect the current context. The piece was performed by Janice, Ali Henry and Nadi Kemp-Safi, with an accompanying discussion and was very well received.

## Financial Transactions 2018/19 - Income

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Arts Council England	32,114	10,959
Birmingham City Council	26,007	21,589
Children in Need	25,882	20,460
Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation	10,100	-
Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health FT	5,058	300
Healthwatch	11,000	-
NHS South Warwickshire CCG	11,169	-
Live Group	7,517	-
Newton Europe	3,321	-
Warwickshire County Council	2,777	-
Springboard	2,855	8,160
Birmingham City University	2,478	-
Eveson Charitable Trust	3,000	-
Norton Foundation	2,790	-
The Grimmitt Trust	3,000	1,500
Grantham Yorke Trust	2,000	2,000
The Roughley Trust	2,000	-
Fields Family Trust	1,750	-
The Cole Charitable Trust	1,000	500
The Harry Payne Trust	1,000	1,000
Baron Davenport Charity	500	500
Arts Award Access Fund	540	-
John Feeney Charitable Trust	-	2,000
Rowlands Charitable Trust	-	500
Other Project income	3,550	33,973
Box Office	3,078	862
Birmingham Women's & Children's NHS FT	-	51,297
Kids in Museums	-	13,467
University of Birmingham	-	13,773
Donations & Gift Aid	1,654	770
Bank interest	83	41
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>166,223</b>	<b>183,651</b>

## Financial Transactions 2018/19 - Expenditure

<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Charitable activities</b>		
Direct - Production costs	10,374	15,943
Project wages & fees	43,377	55,901
Artistic Director	21,005	26,246
Lead Artist Practitioner	18,400	4,200
Direct - Touring expenses	5,432	4,046
Marketing	<u>7,596</u>	<u>2,480</u>
	106,180	108,816
<b>Support costs</b>		
Admin & Intern wages & NI & Pension	12,896	22,439
General manager	24,607	22,910
Marketing & Fundraising Asst	14,535	3,515
Repairs & maintenance	898	649
Insurance	1,970	1,921
Volunteer expenses	-	796
Book-keeping	495	490
Fund-raising	230	410
Premises Costs	4,578	4,349
Telephone & post	2,045	2,050
Core Travel	75	253
Depreciation - Equipment	1,096	1,962
Bank Charges	275	391
Training	1,138	1,434
Subscriptions	<u>611</u>	<u>545</u>
	65,219	64,114
<b>Governance costs</b>		
Independent examination	<u>1,200</u>	<u>1,200</u>
	1,200	1,200
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b><u>172,833</u></b>	<b><u>174,130</u></b>
<b>Net incoming/(outgoing) resources for the year</b>	<b><u>(6,610)</u></b>	<b><u>9,521</u></b>

## Company Members, Partners & Funders

Women & Theatre would like to thank all our staff & Board of Directors for their valuable contribution to our successful year.

### Directors / Trustees

Amarjot Birdi  
Andy Carpenter  
Alison Finn  
Rachel Gartside  
Anna Gregory  
Ellie Griffiths  
Hayley Meachin  
Rebecca Phillips (appointed 26 June 2019)  
Alice Tomlinson (appointed 26 June 2019)

### Company Members:

Janice Connolly – Artistic Director  
Jess Williams – General Manager  
Rachel Snape – Project Manager (left August 2018)  
Rosie Gunn – Project Manager (joined December 2018)  
Jo Gleave – Lead Artist Practitioner  
Matt Smith – Marketing & Fundraising Co-ordinator

### Company Auditors:

Barry Matthews for Bissell & Brown (Birmingham) Ltd

### Partners & Funders:

Thank you to our project funders and partners this year:

Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation, Arts Award Access Fund, Arts Council England, Ashcroft, Austin Social Club, Baron Davenport's Charity, Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Hippodrome, Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Foundation NHS Trust, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Birmingham Conservatoire, Birmingham City University, Bournville College, Children in Need, Cole Charitable Trust, Eveson Trust, The Factory Young People's Centre, The Feeney Trust, the Field Family Trust, Frankley Library, Fox Hollies School, Grantham Yorke Trust, The Grimmitt Trust, Harry Payne Fund, Healthwatch HMP Birmingham, Live Group, Longbridge Health Centre, Longbridge Methodist Church, Longbridge Retirement Village, Midlands Arts Centre, Meadow Rose Nursing Home, NHS South Warwickshire CCG, Newton Europe, Norton Foundation, Osborn House, Selly Oak Trust School, Solihull Young Carers, Springboard, Spurgeons, Swiis Foster Care, Trinity College (Arts Awards), Uffculme School and Warwickshire County Council.