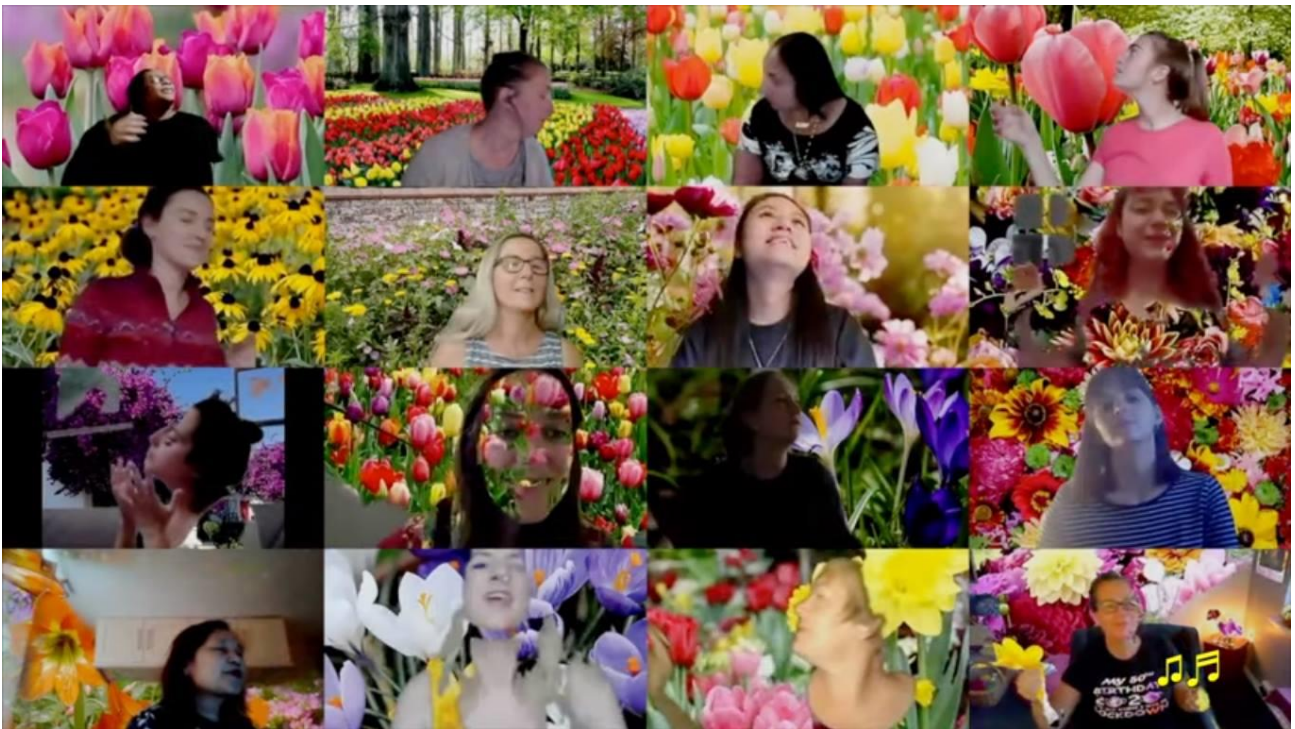




Annual Report 2020/21



Women in Lockdown: Film released 14 November 2020

WOMEN & THEATRE

2020/2021

HIGHLIGHTS



NEW PODCASTS
PRODUCED



FILMS
PRODUCED



FACEBOOK LIVE
EVENTS

22

FREELANCE
ARTISTS
ENGAGED



10723 & DIGITAL
AUDIENCE
MEMBERS

159

WORKSHOP &
PROJECT
SESSIONS

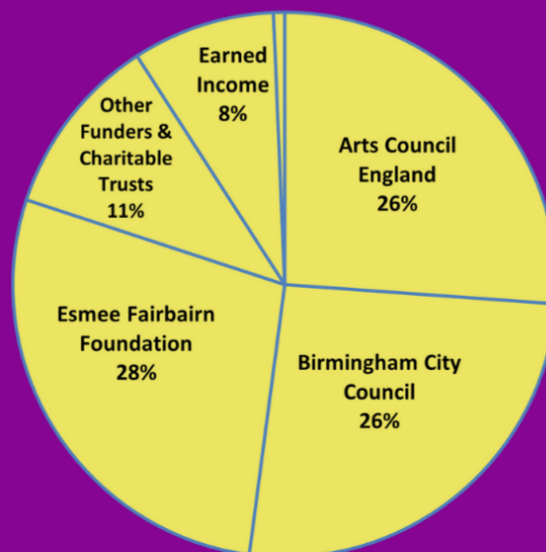
1046

ATTENDANCES

365

INDIVIDUAL
PARTICIPANTS

WHO FUNDED US?



Highlights and Acknowledgements

Women & Theatre responded to the challenges of the pandemic with creativity and resilience and is proud to have continued to deliver projects throughout the last year. We developed online models and responded to changing & challenging circumstances, engaging with our participants & audiences in new and exciting ways.

A significant highlight was our '*Women in Lockdown*' project – made possible with funding from Arts Council England's Covid-19 Response Fund. This ambitious online community project saw W&T research with over 40 women from Birmingham & the Black Country to gather authentic & diverse accounts of the impact of this unique period of History. This formed the basis of a film script which was produced with community performers of different ages & cultural backgrounds including disabled & D/deaf women. Made up of varied footage from Zoom sessions, on mobile phones & socially distanced film sequences, accompanied by an engaging score of commissioned new music, the film premiered on YouTube in November 2020.

We also reached digital audiences through the release of two further podcast series, to complete our Women & Work trilogy in podcast form. Our '*Starting Out*' episodes presented experiences of young women entering the world of work; and our '*Prime Time*' series explored diverse experiences of women in retirement. We have had positive responses to the podcast and increased our subscribers.

The year has also seen us adapt numerous participatory projects to online delivery models. Our '*Community Performance Club*' programme for older adults and carers has involved the delivery of comedy and drama programmes on Zoom culminating in the creation of a piece of digital performance. Over the year we have produced some great pieces of work and engaged a variety of people, positively impacting on their wellbeing, social connections and skills, particularly during such a challenging and isolating time for many of the participants. *Word Lounge Theatre Company* also moved sessions onto Zoom; engaging groups made up of children in care, young carers and young people with additional needs, to produce short films.

Another high point has been securing funding from Esmee Fairbairn Foundation for a 2-year project called '*Moving On*' with and for care experienced young people. Delivered in partnership with Birmingham Children's Trust and Birmingham City Council, the project aims to produce new creative work which informs developments to services and supports children in care in preparing for leaving care. Following initial activity in the autumn, we have collaborated with a group of young people through weekly Zoom sessions since January 2021, making plans and developing creative work.

The year also brought the development of a new programme for health and early years professionals about early childhood obesity. Commissioned by Warwickshire County Council, and developed from research, the programme explores with professionals why conversations about obesity feel difficult to have and to empower them to embrace them moving forward. The online programme piloted in November and was rolled-out further in March 2021. All workshops were well received with active and engaging discussions reflecting the impact of the sessions.

Our BSMHFT partnership continued to go from strength to strength, although involved different approaches and projects, as we were unable to deliver in-person workshops in hospital settings. We delivered on-line sessions for Activity Workers to share approaches and techniques that they could then use with service users on the wards. We were also able to deliver two courses online, engaging service users directly. Partnership work also included the production of short films to support safeguarding training around Routine Enquiry of Domestic Abuse.

Towards the end of the year, we were pleased to resume our '*Track & Field*' project, which had been postponed due to the pandemic. We delivered research activity with women of different ages and backgrounds and worked with a community cast via Zoom to develop our script, sharing the stories &

voices of local women from Perry Barr. We adapted plans which had originally been the launch of a full community production, to producing an audio piece called *Run, Jump, Throw!* which could be enjoyed whilst navigating a particular route of Perry Hall Park.

It has been a busy and challenging year & we have all had to adapt in ways we never thought possible before this year. W&T are extremely proud of what we have achieved and are grateful to the funders who have supported us during this period. We would also like to thank our Board for their ongoing support, advice & guidance during this time. We thank all the core staff, freelance artists, students, volunteers, and partner organisations who have worked with the company. Thank you for the hard work, compassion, energy and optimism.

Artistic Activities 2020/21

This year, W&T delivered a total of **159** practical sessions - in the form of participatory workshops or training sessions. The total number of attendances was **1,046**. We also shared 12 digital works and reaching digital audiences of **10,723** (across podcast, YouTube & radio platforms). The following are some examples of our work throughout the year:

NEW WORK:

Women in Lockdown

Responding to the early months of the pandemic, with support from Arts Council England’s Emergency Covid-19 Response Fund, Women & Theatre embarked on an ambitious community project exploring the lockdown experiences of women of different ages, backgrounds and abilities – culminating in the production of a short film.

We researched with over 40 women from Birmingham & the Black Country to gather authentic & diverse accounts of the impact of this unique period of History. This formed the basis of the film script which was produced using varied footage from Zoom sessions, Mobile phones & socially distanced film sequences - accompanied by an engaging score of commissioned new music.

We worked with 40 community performers of different ages & cultural backgrounds, including disabled & D/deaf women. We benefitted from collaborating with composer Nicola McAteer, filmmaker Sima Gonsai & Associate Artist (Access) Maral Mamaghanizadeh.

We delivered a preview event with our community cast on Zoom and got great feedback about both the film and the participatory process they had been involved with.

The public launch was also successful – with a post-screening Q&A with the artistic team via Facebook live. We received a strong review and great responses from audiences online, including from the D/deaf community

praising the quality of the music descriptions. We continue to promote the film and to date have had over 1800 views on YouTube. You can watch it via: <https://womenandtheatre.co.uk/project/women-in-lockdown/>



REVIEW:

It’s an inventive and powerful piece of online theatre with something in it that everyone can relate to as it spans a range of emotions we’ve all felt.

Amystutz.com

Track & Field

Due to Covid-19, our plans to produce a live community production in Perry Park in summer 2020 were postponed and re-worked, resulting in plans to develop an audio piece – *Run, Jump, Throw!* - designed to be experienced whilst walking or moving around a particular route in Perry Hall Park – which would launch in summer 2021.



Reflecting the vision of the original project, the script for *Run, Jump, Throw!* was developed from research and shares local women’s experiences of track & field; making leaps, overcoming hurdles, achieving their personal bests, and passing the baton on to the next generation. As an international sporting spotlight is shone on Perry Barr amid developments for the Commonwealth Games, we wanted to illuminate and celebrate the voices of local women.

Zoom-based interviews and group devising sessions during spring 2021 informed the development of the script – with recording sessions, sound design sessions & launch scheduled later in 2021.

PODCASTS:

Women & Work Podcast

Following the release of our *For the Past 30 Years* podcast series in March 2020, we released the rest of our Women & Work Trilogy. In April, the *Starting Out* series came out, about young women entering the world of work, and in May, we released our *Prime Time series*, about women in retirement

We also broadcast monologues from each series on Brum Radio and shared podcasts through Facebook Live events – that we branded as our *Listen Club*. As a response to missing live theatre events and opportunities for post-show discussions, we streamed podcasts and hosted discussions on Facebook Live afterwards. The response was really positive with



engaged digital audiences contributing to discussions in the comments thread – and giving positive feedback about the monologues & format.

The podcasts can be accessed via Apple Podcast: tinyurl.com/yx763vvv;

Spotify: <http://tinyurl.com/rfo8d9e>; or

GooglePlay: <http://tinyurl.com/sv3q48q>

Listener Comments on Facebook:

“Have enjoyed them and this platform so much.”

“This really moved me; I want to share with colleagues and friends... It’s as good as an Alan Bennett...so well written, acted and I’m crying like a baby.”

YOUNG PEOPLE:

Moving On

With funding from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, W&T began a 2-year project with care experienced young people. Delivered in partnership with Birmingham Children’s Trust and Birmingham City Council, the project aims to utilise the ideas, experiences and expertise of care leavers to produce new creative work which informs developments to services and supports children in care to prepare for independent living.

During autumn 2020, we engaged with young people on Zoom; delivering some taster sessions as part of Care Leavers Week in October followed by a series of 3 Inspire sessions – workshops about comedy, poetry and visual arts which allowed young people to meet and speak to different artists about their work, two of whom were care experienced.

From Jan – March, we delivered our first block of weekly sessions with our ‘Wednesday group’ of young co-producers. Over the weeks, the group explored different themes about what care leavers need, culminating in a sharing on Zoom. It was a great event with lots of professionals engaged and vocal about the impact of the work. The year ahead will see the development of a theatre production targeting policymakers and professionals, promoting discussions about support for care leavers.

Word Lounge Theatre Company

W&T was thrilled to revive its youth theatre - Word Lounge Theatre Company, with new creative opportunities for children in care, young carers and young people with additional needs.

With further lockdowns taking place, we designed an online project; working with two groups of young people to each collaboratively produce a short film. W&T’s Janice Connolly and Jo Gleave worked with one group each, with film maker Kate Green and support artist Abbi Greenwood working across both groups.



Audience Comments:

“My face is aching from smiling!”
“Everyone’s acting was fantastic - you should all be very proud!”

The process was young person-led, with participants developing ideas, devising, scripting, rehearsing, and performing/filming – as well as completing work independently between sessions. Young people also contributed to marketing, producing trailers for each film.

One group produced their own TV sketch show *You’re On Mute* (<https://youtu.be/UnQQsJxXXf8>) and the other group produced *The Avery School for Gifted Children* (<https://youtu.be/wRb3ucZMlic>) – a comedic drama with lots of characters and plot twists. The films were shared at a premiere screening event with friends and family on Zoom – and were well received.

Amongst all 18 participants, there were demonstrable increases in individuals’ performance, devising, planning and social skills, as well as improvements in confidence and wellbeing.

“We used creativity to manage these challenging times & our low moods.” WLTC Participant

OLDER ADULTS:

Community Performance Club

W&T successfully took its Community Performance Club online, engaging older adults via Zoom. We delivered three comedy courses, led by Janice Connolly, which generated lots of comedy material and created some fabulous films including *Lockdown Diaries* - a series of stand-up routines that reflect participants' experiences of social isolation - and *Laughter in Lockdown* - which shows the different ways that we worked together. These films can be accessed on W&T’s website:

<https://womenandtheatre.co.uk/project/community-performance-club/>



We moved away from a comedy focus for Spring 2021, and Adaya Henry and Naomi Wood led a drama-based course which culminated in a recorded murder mystery performance. W&T’s Marketing Coordinator Matt Smith provided technical support on the majority of course sessions, and support artists and volunteers across the year included Emma Fall, Ziona Smith, Shelley Atkinson, Connor Sherry, Emaleigh Conn, Rosa Simonet and Romy Ashmore-Hills.

Across project delivery, participants reported positive outcomes such as improved wellbeing and reduced isolation. They enjoyed being creative, getting together with other people and developing skills (including writing, performing & getting to grips with zoom!).

Participant Comments:

“With everything that’s going on it’s important that we see the funny side of things... Important to stay in touch with people ... and [this course] has been vital for my mental wellbeing.”

“I got quite a bit out of it, thinking about things, writing and observations of people. It brightened me up, it also helped me during lockdown, helped my mental wellbeing.”

HEALTH:

A Big Conversation

W&T were commissioned Warwickshire County Council to develop a training programme about early childhood obesity, particularly aiming to explore with professionals why conversations about this important issue are felt to be difficult to have. This was originally planned to be an in-person session, but decided to develop a session which could be delivered remotely, via zoom.

Janice carried out research with professionals and designed the programme to include pre-filmed monologues, live performance and facilitation over Zoom. Janice worked with actors Adaya Henry and Ashleigh Aston and the films were produced by Kate Green. Following a successful pilot in November, we delivered further sessions in March.

All workshops involved active & engaging discussions. Responses were incredibly strong reflecting the impact of the training and what they will take forward.

Participant Comments:

“There was a real authenticity about it.”

“Parent’s feedback gives food for thought about listening to parents and working with them.”

“I found parent/worker roleplay useful.”

Partnership with Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Foundation NHS Trust

W&T had another successful year of partnership activity BSMHFT. Due to the pandemic, we were unable to deliver work in in-patient settings, and so delivered some online programmes of work and supported the Trust in other ways.

We created some filmed monologues to support safeguarding training around Routine Enquiry of Domestic Abuse, which were performed by Alison Belbin and produced by Kate Green. Jo Gleave and Jay Crutchley developed an online training programme for Activity Workers; sharing approaches and techniques that Activity Workers could then use with service users on the wards. Accompanied by a resource pack, the sessions went well and staff reported feeling more confident. In Spring 2021, we delivered online drama sessions for in-patients at Mary Seacole and The Zinnia Centre, led by Jo, Jay & Adaya Henry. Although there were some technical challenges, the sessions all had a significant impact on those taking part and we received positive feedback from staff.

Bridging the Gap

W&T collaborated with at Birmingham Uni (across health and drama departments) to explore the potential of developing academic research about the sexual and reproductive health of women and girls with Cerebral Palsy into a theatre production, which could raise awareness / impact on improved healthcare for women in the future.

We ran two creative Zoom sessions involving professionals across health, academic and other backgrounds. The focus was responding to Dr Sonali Shah’s research which we shared in creative ways with Alison Belbin & Janice Connolly performing. The sessions went well, with brilliant responses and insightful discussions. We will go on to produce a podcast, sharing the research ‘monologues’ and some discussions with wider audiences.

Financial Transactions 2020/21

Income	2021 Total (£)	2020 Total (£)
ACE (inc. Emergency Covid-19 Funding)	41,425	50,699
Birmingham City Council	41,173	27,299
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation	44,329	-
Children in Need	-	37,712
Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation	-	10,000
The Space	500	9,500
West Midlands Combined Authority	-	9,999
Government Staff Retention Scheme (furlough)	3,898	-
Warwickshire County Council	10,250	-
Birmingham Community Healthcare Trust	-	13,257
Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust	-	3,184
University of Birmingham	1,617	-
Birmingham City University	900	7,308
Sir Barry Jackson Trust	1,000	3,000
The Feeney Trust	3,000	3,000
The Patrick Trust	-	3,000
The Eveson Trust	3,000	3,000
GJW Turner Trust	1,000	-
The Grimmitt Trust	1,500	-
Grantham Yorke Trust	-	2,000
The Roughley Trust	2,000	-
Cole Charitable Trust	1,000	1,000
William A. Cadbury Trust	750	-
Edward & Dorothy Cadbury	-	750
Baron Davenport's Charity	-	500
Other Income	179	13,645
Donations, Fundraising Event income & Gift Aid	946	2,723
Box Office & Book Sale Income	71	4,309
Bank Interest	34	109
TOTAL INCOME	158,572	205,995
Expenditure	2021 Total (£)	2020 Total (£)
Core Staff Salaries including Employers NI and Pension Contributions	92,948	104,151
Project wages and fees	29,788	75,621
Project & core travel	26	4,396
Production costs	2,621	13,196
Marketing	4,320	6,071
Book costs	465	203
Training and miscellaneous	910	595
Premises costs & Insurance	5,169	7,157
Telephone, Broadband & Website	2,585	1,651
Office expenses, repairs and renewals	380	858
Subscriptions	585	698
Independent examination & Book-keeping	1,846	1,610
Bank charges and interest	116	96
Fundraising Costs	132	532
Donation to MAIA Freedom Fund	250	-
Depreciation of office equipment	481	110
	142,622	216,945

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
Ellie Griffiths
Hayley Meachin
Rebecca Phillips
Alice Tomlinson

Since April 2021, we have appointed Angela Henry, Bethany Kapila & Margaret King.

Company Members:

Janice Connolly – Artistic Director
Jess Williams – General Manager
Rosie Gunn – Project Manager
Jo Gleave – Lead Artist Practitioner
Matt Smith – Marketing & Fundraising Co-ordinator

Company's Independent Reporting Accountants:

Barry Matthews for Bissell & Brown (Birmingham) Ltd

Partners & Funders:

Thank you to our project funders and partners this year:

The Active Wellbeing Society, Arts Council England, Birchfield Big Local, Birchfield Harriers, Birmingham Children's Trust, Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Settlement, Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Foundation NHS Trust, Birmingham Conservatoire, Birmingham Voluntary Service Council, Brum Radio, Cole Charitable Trust, Digikicks, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, The Eveson Charitable Trust, The Feeney Trust, Friends of Perry Hall Park, Fox Hollies School, GJW Turner Trust, The Grimmitt Trust, Grosvenor Road Studios, Handsworth Wellbeing Centre, The Roughley Charitable Trust, Sir Barry Jackson Trust, The Space CIC, Swiis Foster Care, Uffculme School, University of Birmingham, Walsall Rd Allotments, Warwickshire County Council and William A. Cadbury Trust