

Case in Point | Without Walls Associate Touring Network

[Without Walls Associate Touring Network](#) (WWATN) brings high-quality outdoor work to areas where there is low engagement with the arts. This group of festivals works together to extend the reach and benefits of the existing [Without Walls](#) programme to a diversity of audiences across England. Each of the participant festivals selects work from the Without Walls commissions to present as part of their own programme. Participation in the network provides the opportunity and funds to focus on audience development and to introduce new approaches to engaging audiences, utilising expertise from both within and beyond the network itself.

Supported by Arts Council England through the Strategic Touring Programme, WW ATN is a three-year project - 2016-2018 - which aims to strengthen the outdoor sector and enable audiences across England to enjoy the highest quality new work produced by British artists. The Audience Agency is the audience development advisor and evaluator for the programme.

Success Stories

The following case studies celebrate the achievements of some of the WWATN festivals:

[Trespass, Lancashire](#)

[Crafty Cosmos, Leicester](#)

[Garba Project, Derby](#)

Trespass, Lancashire

The Audience Agency is working with the Without Walls Associate Touring Network to support evaluation of audience engagement for Preston City Council’s Brief Encounter event. This event is an integral part of the Council’s strategy to develop audiences across Lancashire in anticipation of the larger scale biennial Lancashire Encounter Festival during its fallow year. The positive story that is emerging about the makeup and engagement of these local audiences is supporting the commissioning of exciting new work in partnership with community hubs.

“Trespass was an opportunity to develop new work and the process has acted as a catalyst for longer-term community engagement in the festival.”

Tim Joel, Events and Cultural Services Manager



In 2017, a ‘fallow year’ for the biennial **Lancashire Encounter Festival**, Preston City Council programmed a smaller scale event called **Brief Encounter**. Brief Encounter, held on Saturday 23 September 2017, attracted 6,000 people to a mini illuminated parade, giant projections and performances on the central Flag Market, and workshops and shows in the Harris Museum and Art Gallery. Designed to maintain the profile of Lancashire Encounter and engage communities across the county, Preston City Council also aimed to initiate new connections in anticipation of the **2018 Festival** and its audience engagement activities.

“Preston City Council were piloting ways of engaging the community and giving them a sense of ownership over the activities on their streets.”

As Lancashire Encounter is a relatively new biennial offer, with the first full festival in 2014 and the next pending in September 2018, Preston City Council were piloting ways of engaging the community and giving them a sense of ownership over the activities on their streets. This ambition led to *Trespass*, a new outdoor video mapping and sound piece, by *imitating the dog* theatre company and composer James Hamilton, which formed the centrepiece for Brief Encounter. The engagement activities for *Trespass* were supported through the WWATN.

Programmed as part of *Brief Encounter* and *Light Up Lancaster*, (an annual arts festival that accompanies the fireworks each year) *Trespass* lit up two buildings across three dates in Preston and Lancaster, bringing the walls of civic buildings to life with the story of a child who goes looking for more. Integrated performances by a specifically-formed community choir enhanced the magic of the moment. Part video game, part *Where the Wild Things Are*, *Trespass* brought some adventure to the dark northern nights!

The community choir of local Lancashire voices came together from groups across the county in a chorus that soundtracked the digital story. Community groups were invited to take part in the choir with the promise: “You don’t need any musical ability or knowledge. You just need an open mind and enthusiasm. And as it will be winter and you’ll be singing outdoors you’ll need some warm clothes and some gloves!”

The composer held a series of workshops with selected groups including young people from Skelmersdale in partnership with Artz Centre, and with adults from Action Factory in Blackburn and Community Gateway, Preston. A final rehearsal brought all the groups together before the performances. In one section of the piece, as the child breaks through the local and world news, the choir members were encouraged to scream out whatever infuriated them about the modern world.

“You don’t need any musical ability or knowledge. You just need an open mind and enthusiasm.”

Participants were supported to attend the events with paid for travel and invited to enjoy festival hospitality at both the Preston and Lancaster performances. 54 participants took part in the workshop sessions, with over two thirds going on to perform at the events.

This project has enabled Preston City Council to explore new partnerships with community groups that can be developed over the longer term. It has provided learnings about how best to engage with groups, such as the need to plan well in advance and engage group

“This project initiated an ethos of local involvement and ownership”

leaders in the planning process, as well as the effectiveness of a final rehearsal of all groups together. As Lancashire Encounter develops, embedding festival-related activities across the county and over the year means that it does not have to start its audience engagement activities from scratch for each festival. This project initiated an ethos of local involvement and

ownership in the engagement activities associated with the Festival. Evaluation of future years’ events will be focused on assessing how important these participative elements of the event are for the success of the festival and for engaging people with outdoor arts.

The signs so far are extremely positive. Comparison of audience profiles for Brief Encounter with those of Lancashire Encounter, using the **Audience Spectrum** profiling tool, indicates an over 10% increase in the proportion of medium culturally engaged audiences - 55% in 2017 compared to 44% in 2016. The proportion of those from lower engaged segments, meanwhile, was successfully maintained at 30% of audiences. These proportions are broadly reflective of those for Audience Spectrum in the local population, indicating that those attending the event are drawn from across the area.

The workshops clearly had positive impacts for the participants, which the Audience Agency will continue to monitor. Lancashire Encounter is excited to capitalise on this momentum as it develops further work to advance local residents’ engagement with outdoor arts.

Kind words from the choir

“Very unusual, but fun”

“I’ve never laughed so much. I feel relaxed.”

“Now I know how to play a kazoo. It’s great.”

“I’d quite like to join a choir now that I’ve had a go.”

“I don’t sing. I can’t sing - I just sang and it wasn’t bad.”

“I’ve always wanted to have a go at singing in a choir. This is great.”

Councillors and contributors

“A highlight was the Trespass light projection on the Town Hall from imitating the dog. The building has never looked so spectacular!”

Councillor Peter Kelly, Cabinet member for culture and leisure

“Trespass was an incredible project to be involved in for imitating the dog. Adding a community participation element into what is normally a cold and detached art form created something which we've never seen before and, we believe, might show a way forward for our work in this field in the future. The level of dedication from the participants was outstanding and the effect of the performances was an emotionally engaging spectacular! We're very proud to have been involved.”

Simon Wainwright, Artistic Director, imitating the dog

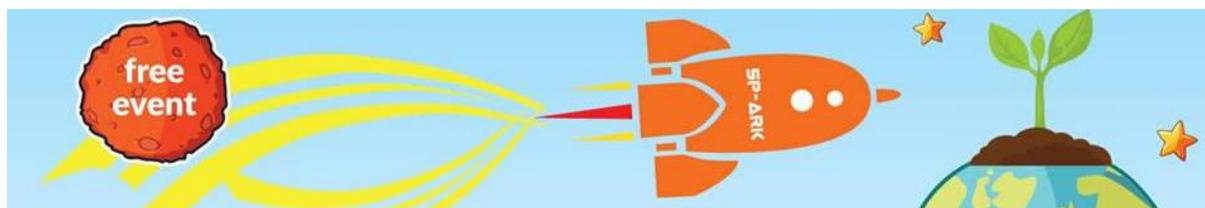


Crafty Cosmos, Leicester

The Audience Agency has been working with the Without Walls Associate Touring Network to support evaluation of Leicester City Festival. Findings revealed great success in reaching the festival’s target audiences. The Spark Arts For Children, in association with the festival, built on several years of partnership working to grow engagement with the festival from areas of the city exhibiting lower levels of cultural engagement. The effort was a great success.

“Families got to build worlds, explore new places and take a glimpse into a future that might be. Some brought along a piece of rubbish and transformed it into a crafty cosmos or they created a colourful time capsule to take home and fill with their messages of hopes and dreams.”

The Spark Arts For Children, thesparkarts.co.uk



The **City Festival** works across Leicester to attract attenders from the city’s outer edges. The particular goal is to engage those communities who would not necessarily expect the festival to be for them, with Indian heritage groups being a key target audience. The Crafty Cosmos project was developed in line with this vision. The project partners with **The Spark Arts For Children** and **Leicester City Council** and is supported by the WWATN in furthering the evolving relationship between the City Festival and The Spark Arts. The Spark has been developing its engagement practice across the city over many years and has found interaction through libraries to be an increasingly effective way of bringing communities together with the arts.

“Interaction through libraries is an increasingly effective way of bringing communities together with the arts”

Inspired by the Without Walls show **Urban Astronaut**, by **Highly Sprung Performance**, which was presented as part of the City Festival programme in 2017, six craft workshops were delivered in six local libraries to explore six key themes:

- Belonging
- Past
- Future
- Sustainability
- The cosmos
- The earth

The **participating libraries** were in New Parks, St Barnabas, Highfields, Belgrave, Beaumont Leys and Hamilton. Most were existing relationships for The Spark, except for New Parks which was a new relationship for 2017.

The drop-in workshops attracted all generations in families, with children from 4 up to 13 years-old. The result was genuinely stimulating artistic activity and conversation. The sessions provided an opportunity for artists, volunteers and community ambassadors to invite participants to the Urban Astronaut show at the City Festival and talk more generally about the festival experience. Participants were then hosted at the Festival with more crafts and activities and a display of their own creations.

“The workshops were boosted by the recognisable local brand of The Sparks For Children”

Crafty Cosmos was ‘packaged’ with a brand (graphic, flyers, posters, stickers and resources) that connected the workshops to the Festival, gave the whole project a recognisable and visible identity and facilitated particularly effective promotion. This in turn made the workshops more accessible and afforded the project a stamp of quality, boosted by the recognisable local brand of The Spark Arts For Children.

Because the project took learnings from the workshops held, in association with the City Festival and supported through WWATN, in libraries in previous years, the 2017 workshops were therefore more successful in attracting a higher number of local residents and making the link between participation and attendance at the Festival. Some key approaches they adopted in response to this research were:

- Hosting drop-ins, rather than specifically timed sessions
- Recruiting five volunteers specifically to support and engage the participants

- Actively encouraging attendance at the festival
- Explaining that the Festival is free to enjoy

Engaging the Leicester City Council marketing team and library staff more in the project was also a key to success in 2017, so that the workshops were integrated into the wider summer offer and promotion was well supported. Libraries also created displays of books on creative re-use and crafting and included the time capsules made by families in the workshops.

- Workshops reached a total of 193 participants, including 126 children
- Children’s ages ranged from 2 - 14 years
- Two thirds of respondents identified themselves as Asian/Asian British with a third White British or Mixed/multiple ethnicity
- Almost all participants said that they would attend the City Festival, and that the workshop had informed this decision, with about a third of children who participated collecting a goody bag at the Festival

The Spark Arts for Children knew from experience that some of their participants would rarely visit the City Centre. All participants were therefore given an ‘invitation’ to the festival, providing full information of where to go to claim their goody bag and what they could expect to find at the event. During the sessions at the festival itself, children got astronaut stickers, which, in addition to the collected goody bags, allowed The Sparks team to keep count of participants and encourage parents to complete evaluation forms. Postcode collection at the events at the festival confirmed that the workshops had been effective in attracting the target geographic areas of Leicester.

This project represents an important developmental step in the ongoing engagement work of the Festival in target communities around Leicester. There is growing familiarity with this pre-festival work, which some participants quoted. Going forward, the City Festival feels it still needs to work more to build confidence in the residents to encourage independent festival visits, although workshop attendance does lead directly to festival attendance in some instances.

“This project represents an important developmental step in the ongoing engagement work of the Festival in target communities around Leicester”

City Festival is attracting audiences from the lower engaged Audience Spectrum segments - particularly Facebook Families and Kaleidoscope Creativity - which make up over a third of its audiences each year. That said, low cultural engagers constitute two thirds of the population of Leicester, so this area-specific work continues to be crucial.

Parents' positive comments

"We came last year and went to see the Imaginary Menagerie. It was fantastic - they still talk about it, they loved the animals - also loved Trolleys."

"I'm really glad we called in to the library today. I didn't know any of this was happening, now I can plan my diary for next week and look you up on Facebook."

"I only found out about this about an hour ago on Facebook. It looks really great. I will definitely be going next week."

Parent attenders at the workshop



Garba Project, Derby

The Audience Agency worked to support the Without Walls Associate Touring Network to advise on evaluation of audience development initiatives for Derby Feste's Garba Project. The people of Derby's incredible response to this project has encouraged organisations across the region to consider the benefits of incorporating large scale participation into their events.

"Feste is a Derby event, so everyone from Derby should feel part of it. This was the first time that the main act was participatory, so that many people enjoyed the night"

Ruchita Shaikh, Artcore, Executive Director



Derby Festé has been working in collaboration with Artcore for the past few years, delivering outreach projects to engage different communities around Derby with the Festival. The initiative has incorporated pre-festival taster events in carefully chosen Derby locations, alongside workshops and invitations to perform. Without Walls artists were particularly involved in the Normanton leg.

In 2017, Derby Festé decided to take this work to the next level by integrating these different communities into the beating heart of the Festival itself. After witnessing the many styles of Garba performed in India across Gujarat State, Derby Festé were eager to bring its energy and atmosphere to the streets of Derby. Feste then collaborated with Artcore, supported by WWATN, to deliver a mass participation Garba event as the finale of the Derby Festé programme on Saturday 30 September 2017.

"The festival coincided with the 70th anniversary celebrations of India's independence"

In a moment of serendipitous cultural cohesion, Derby Festé 2017 coincided with the climax of the Navratri Festival, which is celebrated across the world and concluded on Friday September 29. The date held even deeper significance in 2017, as it coincided with the 70th anniversary celebrations of India's independence.

Engagement activity delivered across Derby, in partnership with Artcore, encouraged participants and audiences to ‘rehearse’ performances of Garba in advance, in all of its stylistic variety, so that they could themselves perform and really embrace the joy of the event on the night.

Choreographer Parul Shah from Vadodara, India, trained 5 dance artists from the UK to teach the steps. The dance artists were from different backgrounds, some Indian, but not Gujarati, and others White British. The simple steps (no previous experience necessary) were taught at four community hubs - Age UK for the over 50s, the Bosnian, Indian and West Indian Community Centres and at five primary schools. There was also an open session held at Deda, Derby’s creative centre for Dance, Contemporary Circus and Outdoor Work and a **video tutorial** was made freely available online. So, across the city over 200 people, aged 6 to 70 years, learnt the steps.

“The Garba Project inspired others across the region to programme large scale participative”

On the night of the performance, the dancers, all wearing specially designed traditional scarfs, were joined by live singers and musicians from India. The centre-piece was performed by the dance artists, along with the community dancers, and the Derby Gujarati Association joined in along with other groups from across the East Midlands. Those who had already learned the steps were teaching others, so that everyone could take part.

Children were encouraged to invite friends and family as a way of enabling people who do not ordinarily connect with the Festival to enjoy it for the first time. In the end, people didn’t want to stop - at 11pm there were around 100 dancers still dancing.

As a direct result of the Garba Project, the Hindu temple invited dancers back to perform for the Diwali Lights Switch on and the dance artists have gone on to work in schools and community groups. The event’s fullest legacy, though, lies in how it has inspired others across the region to consider how they can programme large scale participative activities at significant festivals and events, now that they have seen what is possible. Watch this space.



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