

# “acta

**Annual Report  
2021/2022**



# Foreword from the acting-Chair

This past 12 months has been one of transition, change and recovery.

Our new Director, Oliver Jones, completed his first year in post, and at the end of the year our Finance and Evaluation Manager, Helen Tomlin stepped down, having spent nearly 30 years with the organisation in a variety of roles, including Executive Director. Helen was replaced by Bertel Martin, in the new role of Finance and Operations Manager, who joined the company in February 2022. Our Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Clare Gosling, also stepped down to pursue new opportunities and she was replaced by Rosa Martyn, who joined us from Visual Arts South West, in January 2022. We sincerely thank both Helen and Clare for their hard work and dedication to the company, and welcome Rosa and Bertel into their roles.

As society began to open up again post-pandemic, acta was able to reconvene many of its groups face to face, and to start planning work for the future. Year two of our Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded Cornerstone project supported our Associates Jody Cook and Hiba Elhindi to create ground-breaking theatre and events including 'Silent Heroine's Disco' in Lockleaze, working with a diverse cast of women from all over Bristol, and Sudafest a celebration of Sudanese arts and culture, at our base in Bedminster. We also created our first ever podcast, 'Chocolate Biscuits' in collaboration with acta Associate Mohamed Jama, with girls aged 11-17 yrs from the Somali and Sudanese communities.

Our Foundation worker, Maryam Rutter, worked as an assistant on many of our projects and at the same time made invaluable connections into new communities in Bristol that we hope to work with in the future. As part of Cornerstone we also delivered a series of 6 seminars and online workshops for professional community theatre-makers and socially engaged artists.

The culmination of our two and a half year Creative Europe-funded Rapport project saw us continue to work alongside partner organisations based in Sweden, Poland and Spain to create a powerful production entitled 'You can't grow melons in the UK', with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants performing alongside members of our host community in Bristol. We also delivered an international seminar, 'Creating Theatre Internationally- the power of collaboration', exploring the nature of this partnership over the period of the project. The legacy of this project is a documentary film and publication showcasing all of the work undertaken.

# Continued Foreword from the acting-Chair

Enhancing our offer to young people, we were fortunate enough to receive three-year funding from Children in Need to provide four youth theatre groups for ages 5-18 yrs in Lockleaze as well as delivering Arts Awards and holiday activities. Our other young people's work saw us continue our Young Carers group online, provide a young people's group aged 8-13 yrs, Performing Harts, in Hartcliffe and Withywood, and reconvene our Phoenix group, for isolated young adults, at the actacentre.

Our Adult work was boosted by three-year funding from St Monica's Trust to continue our Making Time group, with the addition of a new peer-support element, and extend our partnership with Fareshare, who provide the food for the hot meal, and Bristol Community Transport. Our regular adult group 'The Thursday's' had a re-branding, and are now known as 'Pick N Mix', and are working towards a show in 2022, and acta co delivered a hugely successful Xmas show, 'Footsteps in the Snow', and continue to meet to create their next production in 2022.

In this year of transition, I would like to thank the staff, old and new, for their continued hard work and expertise, and our Council of Management for their support and wisdom. We are, as ever, thankful to all of our funders including Arts Council England and Bristol City Council without whose support much of this extraordinary work would not be possible. I would especially like to thank our participants, volunteers and audiences for their continued creativity, passion and commitment, without which acta would not be able to flourish. I very much look forward to seeing acta thrive in the future, making collaborations locally, city-wide, nationally and internationally, and advancing its reputation as a world-class community theatre.

Stef Brammar  
Acting Chair

31st March 2022

**Between April 21 and March 22...**



people came  
regularly\* to an acta  
drama workshop

\*more than three times

## **This included...**

144 Young People (under 25)

24 people aged over 55



Performing Harts (for 8-13 year olds living in Hartcliffe and Withywood) meet at Withywood Centre in April 2021





*The best thing about  
acta is bonding with a  
group and feeling a  
sense of belonging*

- a regular workshop attendee



**Babel**  
**- You Can't Grow Melons in the UK**  
23rd & 24th June



**Sudafest**  
12th September



**Silent Heroines Disco**  
16th October



**Pieces of Time**  
28th October



**Force of Nature**  
17th & 18th March



**Hard Evidence**  
9th & 12th November



**What If? 1**  
26th March



**Footsteps in the Snow**  
11th, 13th,  
14th & 16th December



**What If? 2**  
26th March

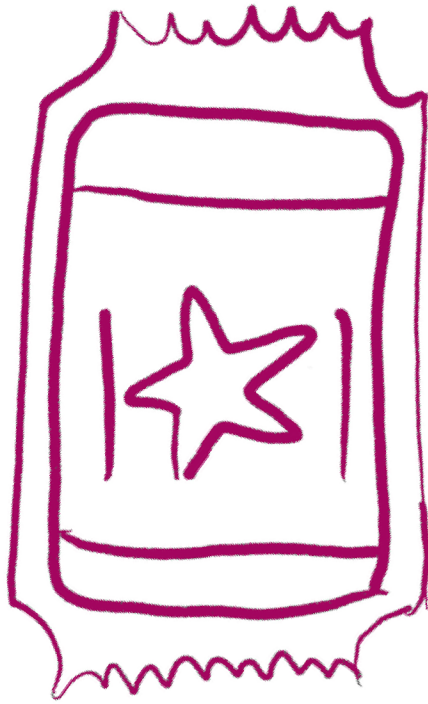




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*this lets me help create something out of nothing and scary though it is, it challenges and stretches me and building bonds with people I am creating with.*

- an acta cast member



# 1163

People came to see those shows

And some left five star reviews!

C

Connor Moffat

★★★★★ 28 weeks ago

Tiny theatre with a big heart. A community theatre that allows 'non' professional actors to perform amazing plays, that are often tackling issues and materials that are more personal and meaningful than the standard big Broadway type productions.

Jo

Jo Joyce Davidson

★★★★★ 30 weeks ago

Always enjoy a visit to ACTA! Friendly atmosphere, full adherence to Covid measures. Worth keeping an eye on for a cheap evenings entertainment.

M

Matthew Freshwater

★★★★★ 31 weeks ago

A great local theatre. It's small so you are close to the performers and feel almost part of it .





*Moved. Emotional.  
Empowered*

- an audience member after having seen  
*Hard Evidence*

12

Unique projects



Delivered across

5

different Bristol  
postcodes

**Hard Evidence**

Working with survivors of domestic violence in BS3

**Performing Harts**

8-13 year olds living in Hartcliffe and Withywood in BS13

**Turn Up Girls**

An audio project for Muslim girls in BS2

**RAPPORT**

International project focussing on refugee arts (online)

**Sufia/Little Folk**

Sudanese Folk inspired arts in BS5 and BS3

**Silent Heroines Disco**

Immersive theatre from an all-female cast in BS7

**Turn Up Women**

An audio project for Muslim women in BS2

**Cornerstone seminars**

Free online workshops for Theatre professionals

**Fen for Fun**

Creative workshops for the Sudanese Community, in BS5

**Zola Tales**

Storytelling for the Sudanese Community, in BS5

**Lockleaze Summer activity**

Creative workshops for the Lockleaze children, in BS7

**Cornerstone Bristol Refugee Rights Workshops**

English language Drama workshops in BS5



*a sense of community  
and belonging*

- feedback from Lockleaze Summer activity

# 29

volunteers giving their  
time to help in various  
ways

supporting workshops,  
helping front of house,  
maintaining our garden,  
cooking meals,  
and more!



A small section of our Making Time volunteers.  
They cook and serve food, help pick people up to  
bring them to acta, and most importantly chat with  
our Making Time participants!





*I love helping in the  
theatre, it reminds me  
of my late mum.*

- feedback from a Front of House volunteer

3 free CPD seminars delivered

Digital + Participatory  
Experiences

The power of  
collaboration

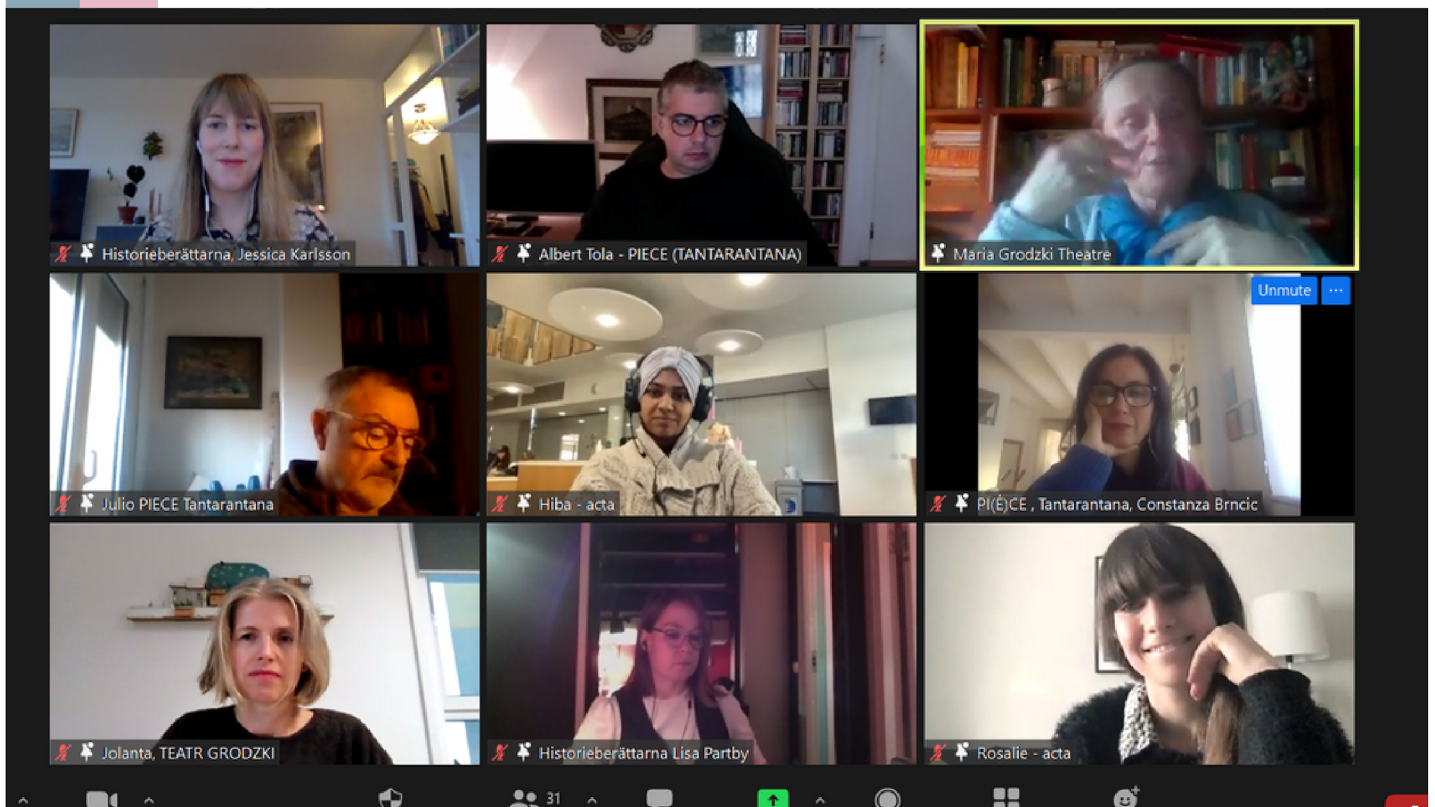
30

Bridging the  
generation gap

50

16

Professionals  
attended



Screenshot from Creating Theatre Internationally:  
The Power of Collaboration on 17th November



*Thanks for putting this on, it was so valuable and will certainly help fuel the direction of my work in future.*

- feedback from a seminar attendee