

2023



**BRAVE
BOLD
DRAMA**
THEATRE & COMMUNITY ARTS

theatre and community arts
Annual Report
www.bravebolddrama.co.uk

Photograph: Dougie Allward
"The Midnight Mission" at Wardrobe Theatre, Bristol

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The Discovery Lab

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2023 FLIGHT LOG

15.01.23:
Hartcliffe Community Centre

10.02.23
Mountford Manor Primary

17.02.23
STEAM Museum, Swindon

18.02.23
Festival of Tomorrow, Swindon

18.03.23
Dorchester Science Festival

17.06.23
Festival of Nature, Bristol

Originally commissioned by the Royal Society of Chemistry in 2021, and further developed with support from Imogen Palmer and Bristol Improv Theatre, THE DISCOVERY LAB can be an interactive sci-fi installation or an improvised theatre show. And is often both.

Its core purpose is to make young people feel confident to discuss, explore and even expand their science knowledge. They do this by helping two friendly aliens who have made an unscheduled landing in the vicinity due to their spaceship running low on fuel.

Their spaceship is fuelled by...DISCOVERIES!

We were proud to present THE DISCOVERY LAB at three UK science festivals in 2023. At the Festival of Nature in Bristol, part of our installation was to help earth experts create out-of-this-world intergalactic images through the magic of our pop-up green-screen studio!



THE MUNCH MISSION!

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**Playable
art heist
family theatre**

**18 shows
April-June 2023**

**872 audience
members**

The third tour of our playable family show **THE MUNCH MISSION** in 2023 saw us break into new geographical areas for us as we travelled north to perform in Peterborough, Bury and Helmsley. We also presented the show in Wales with Theatrau Sir Gar and at Farnham Maltings.

Audiences of **THE MUNCH MISSION** are enrolled as Creative Agents in the Company of International Artists, a top secret global creative agency. Working with Agents Kahlo and Dali (and many more characters besides), the audience chase leads, decipher clues and interrogate suspects as they attempt to retrieve the missing artwork.

It's a highly interactive globe-trotting adventure, full of mystery, nods to film noir and a broad streak of quirky comedy. The agents in the audience control the story by voting throughout the show and giving suggestions. Click [here](#) to see what the audiences said!

REVIEW: GET YOUR COATS ON

"For the audience at which this show is aimed, the pitch is damn near perfect."

"The Munch Mission is a larger-than-life production with big-hearted performances that make, bend, but never break the magic."

"...outrageous heights of precision silliness."

"The on-stage chemistry between Lawless and Simmons crackles with artistic energy."



We spent a week in August 2023 at POOLE LIGHTHOUSE as part of their Sanctuary Artist Residency scheme developing a third playable Company of International Artists' show called THE MEXICO MISSION.

We have no confirmed plans about when or how we will make this show, but, when it's made, it will invite audiences to investigate the art crime of forgery, as well as art by Frida Kahlo and many of her artist friends.

Poole Lighthouse published an article about our residency with them, which you can [read in full here](#). If you're busy, here's some edited highlights.

A MISSION FORGED AT LIGHTHOUSE

“This time we're investigating forgery and riffing on the tropes of film trilogies,” explains artistic director Gill Simmons.

Like the two previous Missions, which played to sell-out audiences at Lighthouse, this new show will also be ‘playable’ with an interactive element that enables the audience to decide which lines of enquiry the agents should pursue. Each playable show has six potential routes, all of which have to be learned and honoured in line with the instruction. The command of the detail and the sheer hard work involved are cornerstone of Brave Bold Drama's ethos.

“That the show is ‘playable’ is not a gimmick” adds Gill. “If you're going to make family theatre that's substantial, nuanced and doesn't patronise its audience, you have to put the work in and it starts here in development.

“We believe in giving literal agency to our young audiences and they are in-role as Creative Agents of the Company of International Artists when they enter the space, so it is then logical that within that world, as Agents on an equal footing with the like the core characters of Agents Kahlo and Dali, they would have a say in how the mission is conducted by voting to express their preferences.

P.S. We hope to make THE MEXICO MISSION as soon as we can!

THE MIDNIGHT MISSION!

8 shows
Oct-Nov 2023

(SLIGHTLY SPOOKY)
PLAYABLE ADVENTURE
THEATRE FOR FAMILIES

448 audience
members

Our second tour of **THE MIDNIGHT MISSION** travelled to Dorset, Exeter, Minehead and Taunton before heading to four venues over the water in Wales, including the fabulous Miners' Theatre in Ammanford, a grand community building built for the town, by the town.

This show is inspired by real-life literary events in 1816, when Lord Byron challenged Mary Shelley and John Polidori to a ghost story writing competition in Villa Diodati on the banks of Lake Geneva.

As with **THE MUNCH MISSION**, audiences are enrolled as Creative Agents in the Company of International Artists, and this time work with Agents Kahlo and Dali to investigate a potential haunting. Think gothic literature meets a game of Cluedo in a theatre!

Click [here](#) to read what audiences said about the show.

REVIEW: BACKSTAGE BRISTOL

"This company know exactly how to write shows for children."

"A clever, multi-layered show."

"Fun, inclusive and interactive in a way that never patronises."

"Riotous family theatre!"

"Simmons and Lawless are a hoot to watch. It's irresistible."

"Quality, innovative storytelling with highly creative staging."

PUMPKINS



"BRILLIANT, HILARIOUS AND WACKY!"
CHILDREN'S THEATRE FESTIVAL, PLYMOUTH

Gourdon and Melonie are activist pumpkins on a mission. They were spotted twice during October 2023.

Specifically, at a family event at Hartcliffe City Farm, and at The Script's The Thing Scriptwriters Festival at Dorchester Arts Centre.

Disturbed that so many of their fellow pumpkins end up in bins every Halloween, they are on a mission to change hearts and minds and improve human/vegetable relations for all time.

Armed with a hand-drawn powerpoint, a ukulele and a really terrible poem, they will not rest until you take the pumpkin pledge and vow never again to throw a pumpkin in the bin.

Free pumpkin recipe with every show!

Ridiculous comedy for all the family, PUMPKINS is a 20 minute sketch that will make you re-evaluate your relationship with squashes.

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK:

"Engaging and imaginative."

"You had the audience in the palm of your hand."

"Best thing we've seen here today."

"It was really funny. I liked how we could join in."

"It's great how you riff so brilliantly off of audience suggestions."



7 shows
280 audience
members

CHRISTMAS WITH NOEL AND HOLLY

We wrapped up 2023 with a 4-day sell-out run of our ridiculous festive family show **YULE BE MERRY** at St Werburgh's City Farm.

Families (and several groups of adults without children) watched hapless Christmas event planners Holly & Noel from 'Yule Be Merry: carefully curated Christmas creations' as they attempt to assemble a 12 Days of Christmas themed event to a tight deadline for a demanding boss.

In the face of insurmountable tech glitches, escaped poultry and unavoidably delayed ballet dancers, Noel and Holly are determined to press on regardless. After all, they do have the pear tree.

REVIEW: BACKSTAGE BRISTOL

"Perfect entertainment. A well crafted piece of comedy theatre.

The final song is outstanding.

Simmons and Lawless execute this flawlessly, with humour pitched at both children and adults."



We dug out our pop-up greenscreen studio again and audiences created festive photos in a post-show workshop! [**CLICK HERE TO READ AUDIENCE FEEDBACK**](#)

EXTRAORDINARY STOCKWOOD STREETS:



Bristol City Council and West of England Combined Authority commissioned us to work with the south Bristol community of Stockwood between February and December 2023.

Our artistic director Gill grew up going to Stockwood Library regularly, so Stockwood was pretty familiar territory which really helped with this project.

We ran 10 free-to-access creative activities in Stockwood High Street (or Stockwood Library) and worked with 8 existing community groups and organisations based in Stockwood including the community choir Happy Notes, BS14 Club for Young People and the community gardening project Stockwood Growing Together.

The result is a free-to-access sound walk that starts in Stockwood High Street and takes you on three different routes all over the area, where you listen in at certain moments to local people's memories and stories, as well as hearing sounds of the community at work and play.

The sound walk is illustrated by Bristol artist Amy Hutchings.

The sound walk was launched in July 2023, and we ran three guided walks to help people access the sound and find their way. In November, we collaborated with Paul Channing who added quotations from this sound walk to planters in Stockwood's new pocket park, constructed in November 2023. Finally, in December 2023, we published this sound walk, along with three others we had already created, in a book called SOUND WALKS IN BRISTOL.

You can buy the book from our [ONLINE SHOP](#).



Celebrating Stockwood as a 1960s development with a Woodstock-style festival in Stockwood Square



Leaf-printing and story-gathering in Stockwood Square



Recording birdsong at Stockwood Open Space Nature Reserve



Listening to the sound walk at Stockwood Bike Park



664 direct participants

13 free public events

Stockwood Pocket Park



Even Stockwood's dogs got creative making paw-prints!

HARTCLIFFE FUN DAYS

We organised 4 family art events at Hartcliffe Community Centre and 1 at "The Hideout" adventure playground, Hartcliffe. Events featured live performance, participatory workshops & take home craft resources for children.

Events ran monthly from January - May 2023

Jan 2023: The Discovery Lab (Brave Bold Drama) and hands-on science workshop (Knapsack Productions)



Apr 2023: The Munch Mission (Brave Bold Drama) with post-show art history workshop



Feb 2023: Chinese Lion Dance (Bristol University Lion Dance Team) and traditional Chinese folk dance workshop



Mar 2023: Friendly Ever After (Nos Three Productions) and clowning workshop

May 2023: circus performance (Darryl Carrington) and juggling workshop



May 2023: festival costume making



16 freelance south-west based artists programmed
243 direct participants
112 take-home craft bags distributed

EXTRAORDINARY STREETS

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WITHYWOOD



SOUND WALK
IN BS13



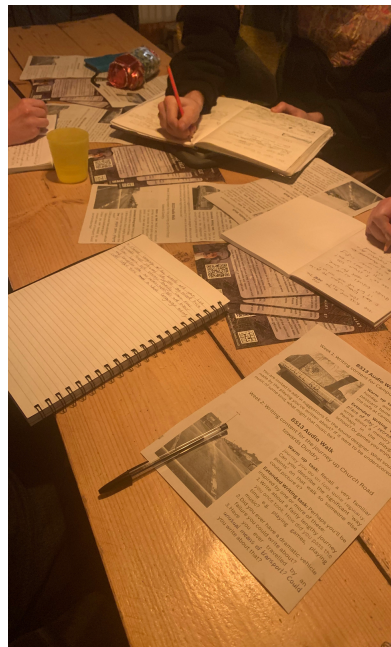
Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



We ran a free creative writing course in January - March 2023 for adults living in BS13. We met weekly in the cafe of Campus Pool Skatepark (BS13) and supported people to write with prompts inspired from the local Withywood area. We worked with people in their 20s to their 70s. Some people were new to the area, some had lived here a long time.

When the creative writing was complete, participants borrowed voice recorders and read their completed creative writing themselves in their homes. We retrieved the recorders and edited the content into a free sound walk, **EXTRAORDINARY STREETS: WITHYWOOD.**

We took the writers out on a guided walk once the sound walk was complete, and in December 2023 gave them a free copy of our book **SOUND WALKS IN BRISTOL which featured their creative writing ([also available in our online shop here](#)).**



Bronze Arts Award

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A BONE-CRUNCHING SMASH OF HORROR & MEDIC-DRAMA...

NIGHTMARE ON WARD 13

Improvised short-form theatre
performed by students from
Bridge Learning Campus, Hartcliffe
Devised with Brave Bold Drama

WED 17TH MAY
7.30PM
BRISTOL IMPROV THEATRE



From February - May 2023 we worked weekly during term time with Year 10 and 11 students at Bridge Learning Campus, Hartcliffe. We trained the students in theatre improvisation, and developed an improv show called NIGHTMARE ON WARD 13 which gave the students scope to improvise within a horror/medic genre which the students had chosen.

We watched two improv teams perform at Bristol Improv Theatre in March 2023, and then returned to Bristol Improv Theatre in May for a glorious sell-out showcase that was passionately supported by the students' families, friends and teachers.

We presented an improv set alongside the students, also in the horror / medic genre to show solidarity for the students, who were being incredibly brave, and we're glad to say they totally smashed it out the park!

Finally, to complete their Bronze Arts Award, the students prepared and delivered their own improv workshop to younger students who attend Bridge Learning Campus primary school.

Kierann Shah, Artistic Director of the Bristol Improv Theatre, wrote many kind words about this project. [READ THESE HERE](#)



TRINITY
COLLEGE LONDON

★ Trinity Champion Centre 2023-2024

Brave Bold Drama was awarded Trinity Champion Centre status 2023/2024 for our outstanding and innovative delivery of Arts Award qualifications. We are the **ONLY** Arts Award Centre in Bristol to hold this award.

arts
award

TOP SECRET**1,060**
creative agents engaged**11 events**

COMPANY OF INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS
2023 Itinerary
Agent(s): Kahlo & Dali

11th February: Creative Mission investigating POP ART.

Location: Knowle, Bristol

4th March: Creative Mission investigating SURREALISM.

Location: Knowle, Bristol

1st April: Creative Mission investigating EXPRESSIONISM.

Location: Knowle, Bristol

14th April: Launch art trail investigating TRAVEL.

Location: Bristol Museum & Art Gallery [<<click for intel>>](#)

20th May: Creative Mission investigating SELF PORTRAITURE.

Location: Knowle, Bristol

30th May: Launch art trail investigating NATURE.

Location: Bristol Museum & Art Gallery [<<click for intel>>](#)

1st July: Creative mission in pop-up outdoor art gallery.

Location: Family Arts Festival, Corby

7th July: Walkabout creative mission.

Location: Pervasive Media Studios, Watershed, Bristol

14th July: Creative mission investigating EXPRESSIONISM

Location: Filton Avenue Primary, Bristol

15th July: Creative mission in a pop-up art gallery

Location: Horfield Library, Bristol

26th July: Launch art trail investigating FAMILY.

Location: Bristol Museum & Art Gallery [<<click for intel>>](#)

Guided sound walks



10 free guided walk events

63 direct participants

We ran a series of guided sound walks in Oct - Dec 2023, funded by the National Grid Electricity Community Matters Fund. By this point in the year we had four sound walks to offer people: Saxons to the Seventies (made in 2020), Wild Words (made in 2021), Extraordinary Streets: Stockwood (see page 9) and Extraordinary Streets: Withywood (see page 11).

Two community walking groups, the Greenway Strollers and the South Bristol Amblers, took advantage of our free guided walks, as well as several members of the public.



“ Charming! Makes you use your imagination. Helps you experience the woodland as children do. ”

“ Really witty. Brings the wood to life. I walk in this woodland a lot and this has made a welcome change. Fascinating to hear about all the different eras. The song is quite magical. ”



This fund also enabled us to print a book containing all four sound walks which we distributed free to community walking groups, local libraries and is also for general sale via our online shop.

Costs and Values

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our core costs are
£3,989
per year

That's just to meet necessary overheads of things like accountancy, public liability insurance and tour van insurance so we can continue to exist legally as a company.

We currently receive
£312

per year from regular supporters via online donations

The rest we have to find through sales from our online shop and getting venues to buy our shows and workshops on guaranteed fees

You can donate [HERE](#)

You can shop with us [HERE](#)



Our values

We are committed to making theatre that appeals to all ages, never patronises and that empowers and delights the audience.

We consciously make our shows so they can tour successfully to accessible community spaces like libraries, schools and parks as well as theatres.

We use our lived experience to ensure all our work is accessible especially for working class communities.

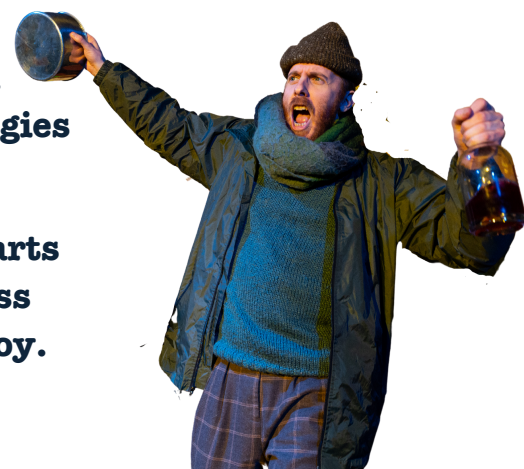
We are committed to being responsible, principled working class artists with the integrity to challenge working practices that exclude working class artists and to offer alternative ways of working to those prepared to listen.

We listen and respond to a community's needs and wishes in a way that is organic, flexible, imaginative, resourceful and fleet-of-foot.

We are committed to fair pay and conditions for freelance artists who collaborate on projects with us.

We are curious about how we can purposefully apply creative technologies to our work.

We are committed to making the arts more accessible for working class people both to work in and to enjoy.





COLLABORATORS PARTNERS and THANKS 2023

Artist Collaborators:

**M Blaydes • Jacob Bouyer • Daryl Carrington • Paul Channing
Anna Haydock-Wilson • Amy Hutchings • Knapsack Productions • Evan Lordan
Nos Three Productions • Jen Roxburgh • Baili Yang**

Partners:

**Avon Wildlife Trust • Bavetta Jones Barbers • Bristol Museum and Art Gallery Bristol
Festival of Nature • Bristol Improv Theatre • Bristol Telephones Rugby Club
Bristol Libraries • Bridge Learning Campus • BS14 Club for Young People
Campus Pool Skatepark • Greenway Strollers • Hartcliffe Community Centre
Happy Notes Community Choir • Learning Partnerships West • Robinson House Care Home
• St Anne's House • South Bristol Ramblers • Stockwood Bike Park
Stockwood Growing Together • Pervasive Media Studios • Theatre Bristol**

The Munch Mission toured to:

**Front Room, Weston-Super-Mare • Exeter Library • Taunton Brewhouse
Cornerstone Arts, Didcot • Lighthouse, Poole • Wardrobe Theatre, Bristol
Clevedon Theatre Shop • Key Theatre, Peterborough • The Met, Bury
Helmsley Arts Centre • Exmouth Festival • Farnham Maltings • Theatrau Sir Gar**

The Midnight Mission toured to:

**Regal Theatre, Minehead • Exeter Phoenix • Taunton Brewhouse •
Sandford Orcas (Artsreach Rural Touring Dorset) • The Torch, Milford Haven
Miners' Theatre, Ammanford • Aberkenfig Library • Front Room, Weston-Super-Mare**

Heartfelt thanks to:

RUTH HILL who joined us in June 2023 as a company director and mentor
AOIFE BEER who joined us in Sept 2023 as a creative assistant producer
WILLOW SIMMONS who operated sound & lights on **THE MIDNIGHT MISSION** tour
MIKE KNIGHT for epic prop & set building skills
SOPHIA STADDON for solid gold volunteering at several of our events and performances
OUTDOOR ARTS UK who gave us fully funded bursary places at their conference in Bradford
BRISTOL IMPROV THEATRE for their numerous acts of kindness
LIGHTHOUSE POOLE for the week's Sanctuary Residency (The Mexico Mission)
NATIONAL RURAL TOURING FORUM who gave us a bursary place at their conference
THEATRE BRISTOL for their generosity and support even as they were shutting up shop