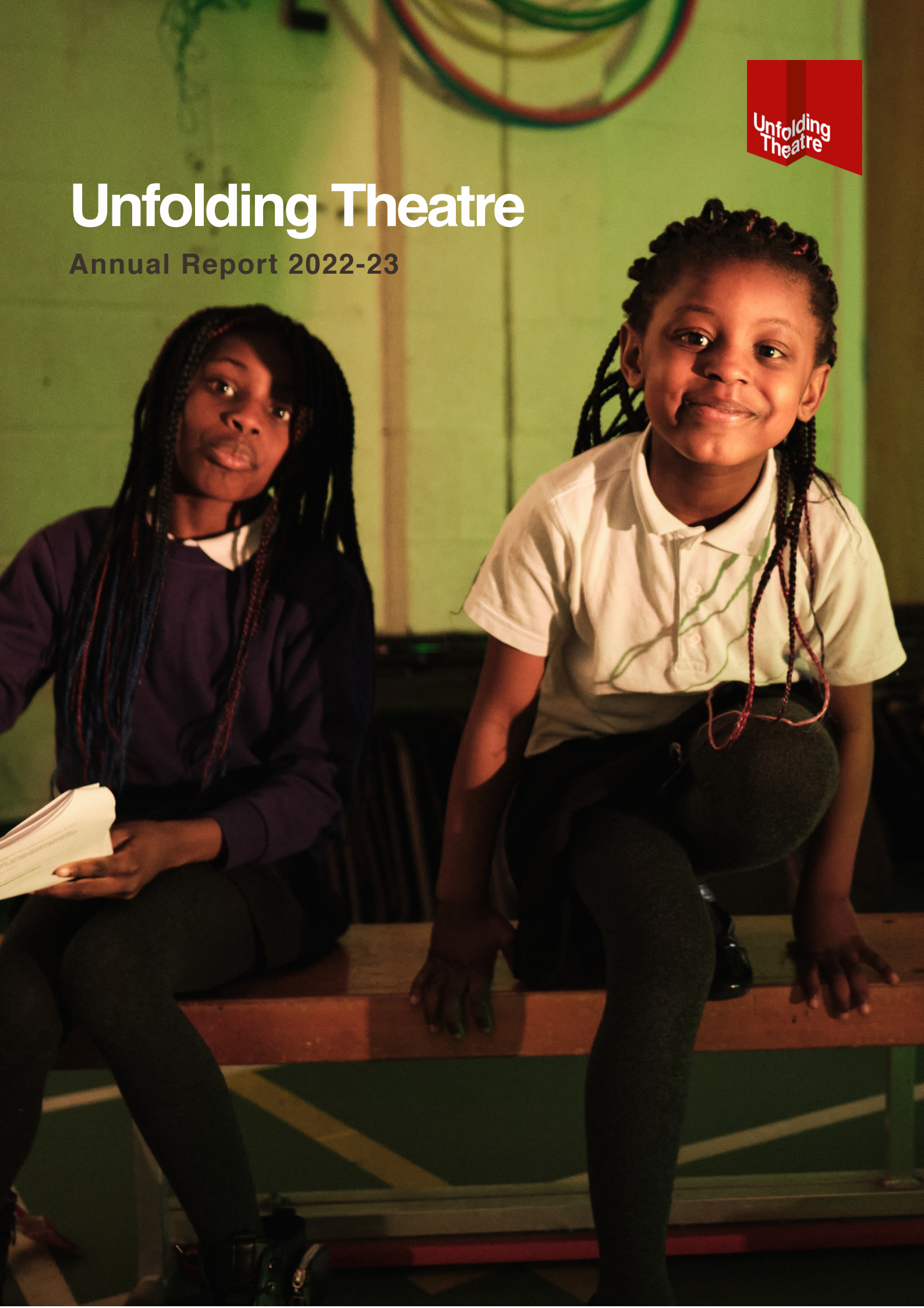




# Unfolding Theatre

Annual Report 2022-23



**Unfolding Theatre brings people together to co-create and experience remarkable theatre that builds connections across social divisions.**

We achieve this vision by co-creating big-hearted theatre with surprising combinations of people. We love hosting people. We value a warm welcome and good listening skills. We bring people together around theatre, music, food, laughter, good stories or all of those things at once. Our work has a positive, sometimes profound impact on the artists, audiences and community co-creators we work with.

## At A Glance: 2022/23 in Numbers



**1,413**

live audiences enjoyed our big-hearted theatre performances.



**2,910**

people engaged with our digital content.



**998**

children, young people and local residents took part in our community based workshop programme and co-creation processes.



**238**

workshops took place across the North East and beyond.



**56**

community groups, organisations, schools and colleges engaged with Unfolding Theatre.



**57**

people made up the Unfolding Theatre workforce.

**Our aims:**

- More people are leading happier, more creatively fulfilled lives
- Mainstream theatre better reflects England's diversity and drives excellence
- People with different life experience are better connected.



**3,479**

creative engagements across our community based programme.



**10**

people supported through volunteering and mentoring opportunities.

**“Unfolding Theatre is one of the North East’s most precious cultural assets, making eclectic big-hearted performance work rooted in participation and co-production.”**

North East Bylines

# Artistic Director's Report



**In 2022/23, the theatre sector has had to navigate the lasting effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and significant shifts in audience behaviours and attitudes. This has meant 2022/23 has been a year like no other for Unfolding Theatre.**

Unfolding Theatre saw a considerable increase in demand for our community-based programme. We delivered 238 workshops - 100 more than we did in 2021/22. These sessions engaged almost 1,000 children, young people and community members and resulted in 3,479 creative engagements.

We continued to work with local residents in Sunderland and a talented team of creative freelancers to co-create A Street Like This. In development since February 2020 – with pauses along the way due to lockdowns and pandemic disruption – A Street Like This will finally hit stages in June 2023. We can't wait.

We reached live and digital audiences of 4,300+ people through our Doorstep Stories project, the tour of Hold On Let Go, Multiverse Lab and a range of other projects. We look forward to continuing to reconnect with audiences in 2023/24.

Unfolding Theatre has engaged new audiences and participants across our programme by working closely with community-based partners including Projects4Change, Byker Primary School, LS14 Trust, the Elders Council of Newcastle upon Tyne, Northern Pride and More Than Grandparents.

We have consolidated our work in Byker and the wider East End of Newcastle, working with over 30 children and young people as part of our East End Story Makers groups. The launch of our first North East Deaf Youth Theatre summer camp supports our mission to make our programme accessible to all children and young people. We have also worked with Cragside Primary School and Gosforth Schools Trusts to deliver inspiring and engaging in-school creative projects.

We have continued to support the North East's cultural sector through the delivery of our North East Culture Socials. These events provided valuable connection and opportunities to share best practice. We have supported volunteering and mentoring opportunities across our programme. The expansion of our Creative Associate team has increased capacity and diversity in the Unfolding Theatre team, offering new avenues to engage participants and audiences. We are committed to continuing to diversify our workforce to ensure Unfolding Theatre's programme is inclusive, relevant and reflects our communities.

Through robust financial management and oversight by Unfolding Theatre's Board of Trustees our financial position remains strong. We ended 2022/23 with a modest surplus of £1,510, growing our Reserves to £71,927. We have secured over £50,000 support from Trusts & Foundations and £3,000+ from the generosity of individual donors and Business Supporters over the past year.

Thank you to everyone who has attended, participated and supported an Unfolding Theatre activity in 2022/23. Thank you to the 57 staff, artists, production staff, trustees and volunteers who have made our projects possible - we really couldn't do it without you all! We're grateful for the ongoing support of our funders, project partners and commissioners in helping us realise our ambitions of co-creating big hearted theatre that brings people together!

**Annie Rigby**  
**Artistic Director**



# Co-creating and developing new theatre

## **A Street Like This**

The company continued to develop A Street Like This – our new music production with our ‘house band’ community group based in Sunderland. Written by Alison Carr, Music by Ross Millard and directed by Annie Rigby, the new production will premiere at The Fire Station, Sunderland in June 2023 before undertaking an Autumn tour of the region.

## **Just Us**

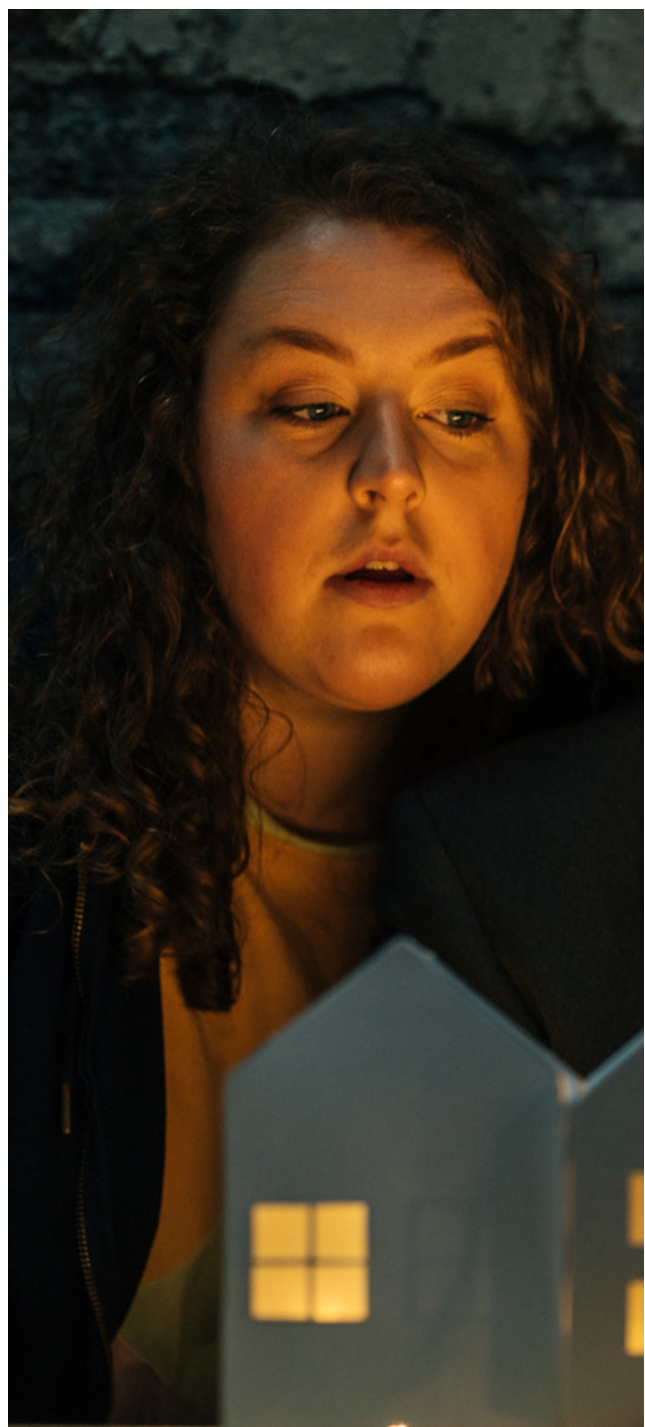
Unfolding Theatre strengthened its partnership with the Elders Council of Newcastle upon Tyne during 2022-23. Working with over 50 local residents, we co-created Just Us, an accessible and inclusive performance the combined creative writing, spoken word and bingo.

## **Hansel & Gretel: The Remix**

We were delighted to be approached by Sunderland based charity supporting kinship care families More Than Grandparents and We Make Culture to create a community panto. The panto was co-created with 22 children and enjoyed by audiences of 80 people.

## **The Odyssey: Episode 4**

Unfolding Theatre was commissioned by Sunderland Culture to direct National Theatre’s Public Act production of The Odyssey. Director Annie Rigby has worked with a community company of 26 people to co-create Episode Four: The Island of the Sun that will be presented at The Fire Station, Sunderland in April 2023.





### **Night Classes**

Building upon the ideas drawn from the company's first Open R&D, Unfolding Theatre has continued to develop Night Classes. This immersive production will question the social goal of independence and challenge the guilt and sense of failure often felt when asking for help. Inspired by disabled people's insights, it asks "Wouldn't we all be better off if we celebrated inter-dependence instead?"

A further R&D, followed by an informal sharing took place in November 2022 and Unfolding Theatre was delighted to confirm ARC Stockton as a co-producer on the project. We have also commissioned Lisette Auton and Becci Sharrock as co-writers, alongside the involvement of Creative Associates EJ Raymond and Alex Elliott as performers.



**“Very thought provoking and engaging. Liked that it was inclusive with sign language.”**

Hold On Let Go audience feedback

**“I’m still thinking the day after about how stimulating the experience was. I remember quite a lot about it!!!”**

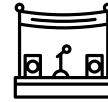
Hold on Let Go audience feedback



# Reaching Audiences

## Hold On Let Go

Our Covid-19 pandemic delayed tour of Hold On Let Go was finally able to get underway in May 2022. The tour visited nine venues across England and reached audiences of 326 people. Sadly, a small number of performances in the early part of the tour were cancelled due to the continued impact of Covid-19. We carried out two audience development sessions in Leeds and Doncaster to build audiences for the performances.



# 1,413

live audiences enjoyed our big-hearted theatre performances.

## The Unfolding Theatre

We were pleased to tour our pop-up structure, The Unfolding Theatre, to two locations in Newcastle upon Tyne. We strengthened our partnerships with Projects4Change and The Unfolding Theatre was the main focus of a co-designed Family Fun Day that engaged 130 young people and their families. We also developed our relationship with Northern Pride, firstly supporting their first Family Pride event and then presenting storytelling and craft activities on the pop-up stage a part of the Youth and Family Zone at UK/Northern Pride.



# 2,910

people engaged with our digital content.

## Multiverse Lab

2022-23 saw the culmination of Multiverse Lab through the delivery of two events in Newcastle and Carlisle that shared the findings from the community consultation process. The events also launched the online archive of Multiverse Lab, a searchable tool that will strengthen the legacy of this creative public engagement process.



## Accessible and inspiring creative opportunities for children and young people



### North East Deaf Youth Theatre

Unfolding Theatre has continued to build relationships with Deaf children and their families through North East Deaf Youth Theatre. Led by Creative Associate EJ Raymond, the project has engaged 37 Deaf children across a range of in-school taster sessions, summer schools and monthly drama workshops.

### East End Story Makers

Following its launch in September 2022, we were pleased to continue offering free to access creative activities to children in the East End of Newcastle upon Tyne. We delivered 62 creative sessions to 31 children between aged between 5 and 14 years old. The group have developed theatre and performance skills, as well as developing confidences, public speaking skills and team working. We delighted to be working with theatre maker Abigail Lawson who leads our weekly sessions.



**998**

children, young people and local residents took part in our community based workshop programme and co-creation processes.

**"No Voice Too Small was a great chance to talk to each other and listen too. Thank you, Unfolding Theatre,"**

Havannah First School via Twitter



### **Doorstep Stories: South Tyneside**

Our Doorstep Stories project in South Tyneside culminated in April 2022 with the co-creation of three unique stories with pupils in Epinay School, St Joseph's RC School Jarrow and Westoe Crown Primary School. The stories – Sweet Caroline, You Can Just Be You and Isabella the Pirate – were presented at The Word, The National Centre for the Written Word to 91 children and their families. The project engaged over 400 children and families in total.

### **The Curious Visitor**

We also undertook a creative residency at Cragside Primary School in July 2022. Creative Associate Alex Elliott visited the school as the 'Curious Visitor', observing and interacting with the school community to inform the development of a larger cultural project. The school successfully secured funding from the North of Tyne Combined Authority and commissioned Unfolding Theatre to deliver the co-designed Through Fresh Eyes creative project over the course of the 2022-23 school year. We have engaged over 320 people of part of this project.

### **No Voice Too Small**

Following the success of the Newcastle Cultural Education Partnership (NCEP) commissioned No Voice Too Small project, we were delighted to be invited to continue working with NCEP and the Gosforth Schools Trust. Working with over 300 children in Years 3 and 4, we are using theatre and performance to build confidence in public speaking, articulating ideas and persuasive writing.

# Supporting the North East Cultural Sector

Unfolding Theatre has offered artistic support to emerging and established creatives in the North East and beyond. Annie Rigby delivered talks to MA Arts Managements students at Middlesex University and students studying at Stockton Riverside College. Annie also contributed to a number of events across the region, including, sharing the company's approach to co-creating with communities with 37 attendees at Culture Bridge North East's 'Imagine If' Conference and discussing the future of the cultural workforce with 35 attendees as part of Newcastle University's 'Wor Culture' event.

Annie also shared information about the company's production of Free School Meals as part of Performance Studies International Hunger Conference.

Unfolding Theatre has also been involved in the launch of North East Exchange, an event held twice a year to connect theatre makers with programmers of venues and festivals. The first event held at the Fire Station, Sunderland was attended by 66 people working in the North East cultural sector. Artist mentorship has also continued.



**57**

people made up the Unfolding Theatre workforce.



**10**

people supported through volunteering and mentoring opportunities.



# Impact & Feedback

**“Our kinship children created and performed their very own, very first kinship pantomime. This was a huge achievement for these children not least of all because of their traumatic start in life but also because many have conditions such as autism, ADHD and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Many of these children had never performed before. Many were never chosen at school to perform because of their sometimes-challenging behaviour. Yet they embraced every bit of the production from start to finish.”**

**Melanie Nichols, More Than Grandparents**

**“His confidence has really improved... even his teacher has mentioned it.”**

**Parent of East End Story Maker attendee**

**“I feel like I've had a relaxation session, it's given me the same calm and peacefulness I get from meditation or yoga. I was completely immersed and didn't think about work or any other distractions.”**

**Lynne Lawson, ARC Stockton talking about Night Classes R&D sharing**

**“The passion of all those involved with Unfolding Theatre. It is a real joy to be around people who are so passionate about what they do.”**

**Feedback via annual workforce survey**

**“I appreciate the support and encouragement you've given everyone with A Street Like This. I'm absolutely loving being involved. I'm starting to wonder if I made a mistake all those years ago in being a builder, because I feel very at home in a theatrical workshop setting.”**

**Member of A Street Like This Community Company**

**“Our child had an absolute ball with North East Deaf Youth Theatre. We hope there will be more theatre to come as she can't wait to come back. Sessions like this are so important for Deaf children as they help build links between children and families in out of school settings.”**

**Parent of North East Deaf Youth Theatre attendee**

**“Two fine actors relayed vital issues of our lives, which they had gleaned from workshops over four days during August, in Fenham and Byker. From this, a manifesto arose for an imagined community of hope and practical ideals.”**

**Just Us, Community Co-creator**

**“Feeling part of a team - a team that cared. Feeling absolutely valued. Meeting amazing new creative and kind people. Feeling a part of doing something meaningful. Employment. Making something new.”**

**Feedback via annual workforce survey**

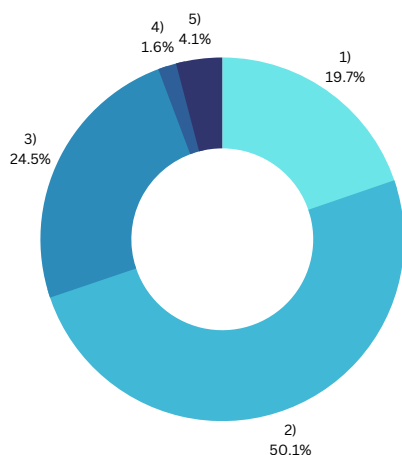


# Finance & Fundraising

Company turnover:

## £213,590

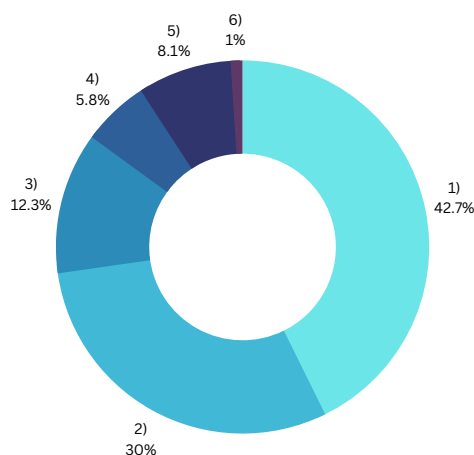
- 1) Earned Income: £42,158
- 2) Arts Council England: £106,932
- 3) Trusts & Foundations: £52,262
- 4) Donations and Sponsorships: £3,488
- 5) Other income: £8,750



Company expenditure:

## £201,047

- 1) Salaries & On Costs: £85,841
- 2) Artistic & Production Staff: £60,401
- 3) Project Costs: £24,697
- 4) Marketing: £11,670
- 5) Company Running Costs: £16,368
- 6) Governance Costs: £2,070



Company reserves:

## £71,927

Unfolding Theatre made a total surplus of £12,543 of which £11,033 represents Restricted funds carried forward for activities in 2023-24. The remaining unrestricted surplus of £1,510 brings Unfolding Theatre's Reserves to £71,927.

Unfolding Theatre's accounts were independently examined by chartered accountant, Pete O'Hara FCA. Full copies of the accounts are available via the Charity Commission and on request.

### Fundraising

Unfolding Theatre is grateful for the support we received from funders in 2022-23. We were delighted to continue to receive National Portfolio Organisation funding from Arts Council England. In addition, we were generously supported by a range of Trusts and Foundations, Business Supporters, individual donors and commissioning partners.

For more information on how you can support Unfolding Theatre, please visit [www.unfoldingtheatre.co.uk/support-us](http://www.unfoldingtheatre.co.uk/support-us).

# Plans & Goals for 2023/24



Unfolding Theatre was successful in securing Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation funding for 2023-2026. We also continue to be supported by the Newcastle Cultural Investment Fund. This multi-year investment will enable the charity to build upon the community partnerships and relationships with participants and audiences it has developed, support the charity with its modest ambitions for growth and continue its artistic innovation.

We will present *A Street Like This*, to audiences in Sunderland, followed by a regional tour of the North East in Autumn 2023.

Working with production partner ARC Stockton, we will continue to develop our new immersive theatre show *Night Classes*. *Night Classes* will be presented in March 2023. We plan to then tour to national theatre audiences and are in the process of developing our touring partners and venues.

Building upon the success of *The Odyssey Episode 4*, Annie Rigby will direct a group of Sunderland-based participants in *Episode 5* on behalf of National Theatre Public Acts and Sunderland Culture.

Our accessible and inspiring work with children and young people will continue through the delivery of our weekly *East End Story Makers* session, North East Deaf Youth Theatre and a revisiting of *Free School Meals* with children and young people living in Seacroft, Leeds.

Our work reaching local audiences continues through our partnerships with *Projects4Change* and *Northern Pride*. We look forward to utilising our pop-up stage and sharing an exciting programme of theatre and performance with audiences as part of the *Cowgate Family Fun Day*, *Ouseburn Family Pride* and *Newcastle Pride*.

The charity will continue to create opportunities to support the region's cultural workforce through the delivery of two North East Cultural Social events. We will continue to provide mentoring and volunteering opportunities.



## Contact us






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Charity Commission Number: 1165182

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SIR JAMES KNOTT TRUST



Unfolding Theatre is a company limited by guarantee and a charity registered in England and Wales. Company No: 6764666 Charity No: 1165182 VAT Registration No: 267 3483 75. Full Annual Accounts and Report available.

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