



# Unfolding Theatre

Annual Report 2014/15



## Unfolding Theatre makes remarkable theatre with a wild sense of humour and a delight in bringing people together.

We tour our shows to audiences across the UK and beyond. We are proud to have won awards for our productions, *Lands of Glass*, *What If?*, *Best in the World* and *Building Palaces*. We are even more proud to have audiences describe our shows as “utterly delightful”, “one of the most magical and joyful things I’ve ever seen” and “moving, funny, wise and warm.”

Participation fuels our creativity. We welcome people of all ages into drama workshops and projects. Their ideas and experiences inspire the theatre we make. We continue to collaborate with diverse participants all the way through our creative processes. By doing so, we generate remarkable, insightful theatre sharing their stories.

We inspire and mentor emerging artists in the North East of England. We do this to contribute to making our home region an exciting, supportive place for young ambitious theatre-makers.

Artistic Director, Annie Rigby, founded Unfolding Theatre in 2008. She leads the company alongside producers, Dick Bonham and Gloria Lindh (LittleMighty). We collaborate with inventive, talented artists, including Associate Artist, Alex Elliott.

We are based at Foundry Lane Studios in Ouseburn, Newcastle upon Tyne.



# Artistic Director's report

**It has been a smashing year for Unfolding Theatre. We reached more audiences and participants than ever before. We won awards, great press and audience feedback for our shows and community projects. We collaborated with incredible artists and supported talented emerging artists.**

I say it has been a smashing year, but I am relieved that we only broke one vase (which played a low E) in making and touring *Lands of Glass*. The show featured Brendan Murphy's extraordinary orchestra of glass musical instruments (replacement low E found in TK Maxx). It previewed at Battersea Arts Centre and National Glass Centre (where else?!) before a successful Edinburgh Festival run at Summerhall. The Spring saw it return to Northern Stage, where it won the Title Pending Award, Harrogate Theatre and Trouble At Mill (Leeds). We also collaborated with Bait (Creative People and Places) to enable people at mental health support centres to make remarkable glass music and theatre pieces.

From glass to darts (good to keep them apart), we were delighted to tour *Best in the World* again. Touring enables audiences to access our joyful, rewarding theatre experiences. We played to festival crowds at Greenbelt and Trouble At Mill and staged young people's performances. Accompanying workshops enabled them to explore personal aspirations and achievements.

We collaborated with fantastic organisations on major participation projects. These projects enabled diverse communities to access the arts. Greenfield Arts commissioned *Cutting Loose*, a large-scale outdoor parade in Newton Aycliffe. We directed *The River Keeper* with Streetwise Opera, with homeless and

ex-homeless people. We were a small part of The Cultural Spring's very big *BBC Great North Passion*, working with Bait and Ashington Children's Centre.

We celebrated the success of past projects. *What If?*, made with Greenfield Arts and Durham University, won the NCCPE Engaging Young People Award. The award celebrated our innovative collaboration with young people and scientists to create an interactive performance nurturing curiosity in schools audiences.

We ran workshops and mentored students and young artists in the North East. This included workshops with Northern Stage's young company, NORTH, Tyneside Cinema gallery assistants and University of Northumbria drama students. This supports our mission to inspire and

nurture other young local theatre-makers.

We were delighted to be commissioned by The Cultural Spring to develop *Putting The Band Back Together*. This new show is about people who have given up playing musical instruments. It invites audiences to blow the dust off instruments and play again. We can't wait to premiere the show at Summer Streets Festival, July 2016.

Thanks to the 5,834 people who attended performances and workshops, the 45 artists and production staff we employed, our brilliant board, and the funders and commissioners who made it possible. Here's to another great year!

**Annie Rigby**  
Artistic Director



# 2014/15 projects



## Lands of Glass Winner: Northern Stage Title Pending Award

**“Chiming, harmonising,  
enchancing”**

★ ★ ★ ★

Telegraph

*Lands of Glass* was our most ambitious production to date. Set in Quinnipak, an unforgettable town, it invited audiences to meet a glassmaker dreaming of a crystal palace, a musician listening for notes only he can hear, and an orphan waiting to grow into his jacket-shaped destiny.

Our adaptation of Alessandro Baricco's novel featured a glass orchestra and seriously talented performers (Tom Bancroft, Hannah Boyde, Brendan Murphy, Becca Owen and Tom Walton). Its theatrical inventiveness helped develop our bold, playful artistic voice.

The production forged relationships with prestigious venues, including the Young Vic, The Lowry, Harrogate Theatre and Summerhall. It attracted 1,890 audience members, including sell-out performances at Northern Stage, Battersea Arts Centre, National Glass Centre, Trouble At Mill and Summerhall (Edinburgh Festival). We received fantastic audience feedback and press reviews.

An enormous thank you to production manager, Simon Henderson and designer, Andrew Stephenson, who made it possible to tour a set made mostly of glass.

**BATTERSEA  
ARTS CENTRE**



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

**NORTHERN  
STAGE**



## A Place To Escape

**“Best time spent in ages. It gave  
me something (a lot) to get out  
of bed for.”**

**Participant**

*Ashmore House*

Bait (Creative People and Places, South East Northumberland) commissioned a remarkable participation project alongside *Lands of Glass*. We ran workshops in mental health support centres exploring the show's theme: how we use imagination to deal with trauma.

Participants worked with director, Annie Rigby, and glass musician, Brendan Murphy to develop writing and music. Their insights into creativity and wellbeing fed into



our creative process. A short film of their original writing and music was presented at a celebration event at Newbiggin Maritime Centre.

BIG Lottery Awards for All enabled us to extend the programme of drama and music workshops to more groups across the North East, including people with learning disabilities, women in probation and people attending mental health support services.



LOTTERY FUNDED



## Best in the World

**“I will never forget the effect that  
Unfolding Theatre's Best in the  
World had on me.”**

*North East Theatre Guide*

Demand continues for our heart-warming, hilarious show about darts and personal triumphs. Over 2,500 people across the UK have now seen *Best in the World*. This year we performed to festival crowds at Greenbelt Festival and Trouble At Mill, at a young people's festival in Barnard Castle and to students at University of Bedfordshire. We have been particularly delighted to see the impact the show has had on young people, inspiring them to think about their own aspirations and achievements.



## Putting The Band Back Together

**“Absolutely fantastic. I loved every second!”**

**Participant**

Is there a guitar propped up in your bedroom? A singing voice only heard in the shower? A trumpet boxed up in the attic? Well, blow off the dust. We're putting the band back together!

Thanks to The Cultural Spring's commission, we have begun work on our next major production. This show explores people's experiences of playing, giving up and (hopefully) starting again. At its heart is a band of local ex-players. Working with musician, Ross Millard (The Futureheads), writer, Chloe Daykin and performers, Alex Elliott and Mark Lloyd, we've shared tunes, stories and guitar strings.

We're incredibly excited to announce that we will premiere the show at The Cultural Spring's Summer Streets Festival in Sunderland in July 2016. Want to join the band? Get in touch!



## Other projects

Thanks to funding from Community Foundation's North East Fund for the Arts, we returned to Kyloe House Secure Children's Unit, Northumberland, to deliver a drama and dance project with young people. Working with Annie and dancer, Rokas Saltenis, the group found creative ways to explore and express personal achievements.

One of our most rewarding



## Cutting Loose & What If?

**Winner: NCCPE Engaging Young People Award**

Our collaborations with Greenfield Arts have been sources of delight this year. We were proud to see young people from Greenfield School pick up a national award for *What If?*. The award celebrated innovative collaboration, between young people, Durham University scientists and theatre-makers. Together we created an interactive performance for schools, nurturing young people's curiosity.

We also collaborated on the large-scale parade, *Cutting Loose*. It featured over 300 children from 12 schools in Newton Aycliffe, community groups and brass bands. Together they designed a 10-foot puppet of a grumpy Fairy King, and came up with hundreds of ideas for what might make him smile. Their ideas became banners, dances and sound installations along the route of the parade. Needless to say, that King isn't grumpy any more.



commissions was directing *The River Keeper* for Streetwise Opera. They make opera with people who have experienced homelessness. It was an inspiration to work with their Gateshead and Middlesbrough groups.

We have been developing exciting projects that will be presented in 2015/16. This includes participatory event and publication, *The Mums and Babies Ensemble*. The project aims to forge communities for mums and babies to share and explore their experiences. It is a collaboration between Duška Radosavljević and baby Joakim, Lena Šimić and James, Annie Rigby and Nina. We tested out our ideas

## A Critical Conversation

**“The honesty, the transparency, and the respectfulness in the conversations are really lovely.”**

**Attendee**

As part of a creative residency at Northern Stage, we hosted a symposium exploring the impact that working in participatory arts has on artists. We held the event because we are frustrated by how often conversations about arts participation overlook impact on artists. We know our work in communities and schools has a profound impact on our creative processes. We invited other artists to share their experiences, practices and thoughts. The panel included Annie Rigby, Kylie Lloyd (Northern Stage), Matt Peacock (Streetwise Opera) and Tassos Stephens (Coney). Over 30 arts practitioners discussed the unexpected gifts, challenges and perspectives their practice had given them. The event was supported by Paul Hamlyn Foundation's Artworks programme.



at Gateshead International Festival of Theatre (supported by Jerwood Foundation) and at AllChange Festival, as part of Fun Palaces, at Lyric Hammersmith. The project is funded by AHRC.

Great North Run Cultural Programme commissioned us to create *And Let Us Run*. The show features David Almond's poem celebrating the millionth runner and creative responses from children at 7 schools. It went on to tour schools in May 2015.



# Company development

## Staff

We employed 45 artists and technicians in 2014/15. Their talents, skills and imagination fuelled our projects' success. We are proud that 63% of 2014/15 expenditure went to artists (including the Artistic Director's salary of £14,473), offering them professional opportunities to experiment, collaborate and create new work.

We continue to collaborate with producers, LittleMighty. They have enabled us to tour *Best in the World* and *Lands of Glass* across the UK. This supports Unfolding Theatre's development by forging relationships with more national audiences.

It was a pleasure to host Cécile Garrett, a placement from University of Northumbria's Cultural Management MA. She brought great ideas, enthusiasm and meticulousness to the marketing and evaluation of *Lands of Glass*.

## Advisory Group

As ever, our Advisory Group has been a source of wisdom, encouragement and guidance. Annie Rigby was re-elected as company director, alongside Anna Disley, Susan Coffey and company member, Alex Elliott, at this year's AGM.

2014/15 saw us start the process of applying for charitable status. Becoming a charity will strengthen Unfolding Theatre's governance. It will help us grow as a company, accessing sources of charitable funding to reach more audiences and participants. The first steps in the process have been to welcome Tim Bailey (xsite architecture) and Wendy Smith (Sage Gateshead) to join us as trustees. Annie Rigby and Susan Coffey will step down from the board, with Annie continuing as Artistic Director, in 2015/16.

A special thank you to Jackie Elliman at Independent Theatre Council who is working with us on our charity application.

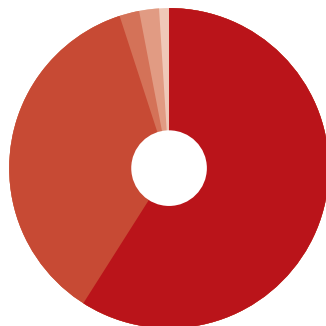
## Supporters

Thank you to the funders who made our work possible in 2014/15: Arts Council Grants for the Arts, supporting *Lands of Glass*, BIG Lottery Awards for All, supporting *A Place To Escape* community workshops, Community Foundation's North East Fund for the Arts, supporting workshops at Kylee House Secure Children's Unit and Paul Hamlyn Foundation (Artworks), supporting our Critical Conversation event. We are supported by Arts Council's Catalyst fund, as part of a consortium led by The Empty Space, investing in increasing our fundraising capacity.

A very big thank you to The Shards, the crowd-funders who helped us take *Lands of Glass* to Edinburgh. Smashing supporters include Rachel Adam, Iona Owen, Helen Ferguson, Mark Calvert, Rebecca Ball, Kate Craddock, Kathy Paul, Amy Golding, Colin Davies, Frances Easter, Sam Rigby, Wayne Gamble, Tim Bailey, Howard Gooding, Mark Robinson, Graeme Rigby, Viv Peyton, Anna Disley, Carol Clewlow, Lauren Bishop, Ed Vainker, Alfred Hickling, Matt Burman, G M Conroy, Jane Hall, Michelle Percy, June Svenson, Susan Boyde, Bernadette Boyde, Alex Kelly, Lorne Campbell, Adrian R, Susan Coffey, Kevin Jamieson, Carl Kennedy, Jenny Hoy, Pady O'Connor, Amy Moffatt, Leyla Asadi, Elora Baishnab, Teresa Kirby, Laura Boyd, Kerrie Ho, Neringa Stonyte, Nicola Irvine, Diane, Amy Fawdington, Ben Ayrton, Kay Hepplewhite, Jake Kearney, Tim Dalling, Hannah Clarke Stamp, Amy Mackelden, Stella Duffy, Reed Ingram Weir, Odile Groves, Robin Johnson, Ruth Johnson, Roma Yagnik, Sara Barnard, Natalie Querol, Daniel Bye, Davey Jones, Gloria Lindh, Alison Holmes, Matt Stalker, Daniel Chapman, Julia Morris, Andy Playford, Stevie Glover, Katy Fuller, Taedmo, Hannah Nicklin, John Gaston, Barbara Meier, Hal Branson, Gary Bainbridge, Kylie Lloyd, Maddy Costa and Lauren Hurwood.

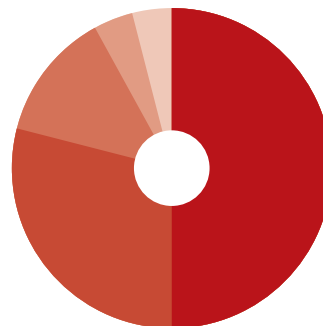
# Finances

Company turnover in 2014/15  
**£110,609**



- Earned Income **£64,768**
- Arts Council funding **£39,838**
- Other public funding **£2,500**
- Individual giving **£2,103**
- Trusts and Foundations **£1,400**

Company expenditure in 2014/15  
**£109,196**



- Artists & production staff **£54,086**
- Project costs **£31,313**
- Director's salary **£14,473**
- Producers **£4,800**
- Running costs **£4,524**

Unfolding Theatre made a surplus of £1,413. Unfolding Theatre's reserves now stand at £10,130.

(Note: 2014/15 was an extended tax year, 1 January 2014 to 31 March 2015, to bring our year end in line with the end of the financial year).

# Audiences, participants & staff

In 2014/15 we presented 45 performances to 4,960 audience members and ran creative projects with 874 participants. We employed 45 artists and production staff. We hosted 1 work placement through University of Northumbria Cultural Management MA.

Here are some of the things they said.

**“Sparkling storytelling & a lovely ensemble piece of quite unique vision”**

★ ★ ★ ★

**Herald Scotland**

*Lands of Glass*

**“Completely magical”**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**Edinburgh Festivals Magazine**

*Lands of Glass*

**“Incredible. Not like any other show I’ve seen before. Extremely talented musicians and actors.”**

**Audience member**

*Lands of Glass*

**“My dad said it was “utterly delightful”, which is pretty spectacular praise from him. My mum was in tears she loved it that much”**

**Audience member**

*Lands of Glass*

**“I was blown away by the performance... One of the struggles we face in school is low aspiration amongst pupils and this seemed a perfect riposte.”**

**Audience member and teacher**

*Best in the World*

**“Music and drama lifts our mood so much and builds confidence up. Thank you so much.”**

**Participant**

*A Place to Escape, Ashmore House mental health support centre*

**“[I felt] calm, but excited, fulfilled and proud.”**

**Participant**

*A Place to Escape, Healthwise*

**“Kev and I were on a real high after the workshop... I have done 2 buskers’ nights since. I couldn’t have done it without you guys. Thank you to the team.”**

**Participant**

*Putting The Band Back Together*

**“It’s one of the best shows I’ve been in and I loved the whole adventure of making it.”**

**Tom Walton**

*Performer, Lands of Glass*

**“An Unfolding Theatre project has, at its heart, an integrity that allows a level of participation and genuine collaboration that is rarely achieved. I, personally, have been inspired by this wholehearted commitment to giving time and space to artistic and human dialogue.”**

**Alex Elliott**

*Associate Artist*

## Plans & goals for 2015/16



We are excited to be developing *Putting The Band Back Together*, working with The Cultural Spring (South Shields and Sunderland) and Leeds Inspired (Farsley). Developing this inventive and personal new piece supports our artistic mission of making theatre with a wild sense of humour and a delight in bringing people together.

We will be touring *Lands of Glass* and *Best in the World* to venues from The Lowry to Greenfield School. This supports our goal of growing regional and national profile and demand.

Collaborations with Great North Run Cultural Programme, The Mums and Babies Ensemble and Northern Stage enable us to offer inspiring, inventive arts opportunities to children, young people, adults and those seldom reached by the arts.

We plan to become a charity in 2015/16. This aims to strengthen Unfolding Theatre’s governance. It also helps us access funding so we can reach more people with our joyful, rewarding theatre experiences.





## How you can support Unfolding Theatre



### Work with us

If you would like to commission Unfolding Theatre, we would love to hear from you. Since 2008 we have delivered performances, projects and workshops for theatres, schools, community groups, universities, businesses and festivals.

We love working with people, and in places new to us, so drop us a line and let's start talking.

### Train with us

Unfolding Theatre supports people to be creative, learn and develop skills. We have delivered training workshops, including creative team-working, presentation skills and facilitation techniques for young people, teachers, local authority teams and businesses.

To find out more, email Annie at [annie@unfoldingtheatre.co.uk](mailto:annie@unfoldingtheatre.co.uk)

### Make a donation

Your donation will support the development of new show, *Putting The Band Back Together*. It will go towards the costs of bringing together a talented team of artists to rehearse, tour and deliver community workshops enabling local people to join the band for each performance.

To make a donation, send a cheque made out to 'Unfolding Theatre' to the address below, or email us for details of how to make your donation online.

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#### Annie Rigby

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