

**BRIGHTON
PEOPLE'S
THEATRE**

Annual Report
October 2021 — March 2023

BELONG



HELLO

Contents:

- 2 A message from our Chair
- 3 A message from our CEO & Artistic Director
- 4 The BPT Story
- 6 Key achievements
- 13 Funding and Finance

A message from our Chair



Coming through the pandemic, Brighton People's Theatre has proved to be a vital force for good for our participants, community and partners. It is clear that BPT plays an essential role for the people of Brighton.

In 2021 BPT we expanded our board to seven trustees, with just under half being new to the organisation and bringing a fresh perspective. In 2022 the new board took time to support the development of a new business plan which puts the ethos and methodology of this unique organisation at its heart.

100%

100% of our participants say their wellbeing has improved through their involvement with BPT.

Paul Hamlyn Foundation's continued support has allowed BPT to move forward in creating a sustainable business model. BPT is now working towards an ambitious business plan which looks to diversify and strengthen our funding streams and increase our collaboration with key partners.

This has been a time of considerable change for the charity, but one thing has not changed, and will never change – Brighton People's Theatre is owned and loved by the people of Brighton.

Thomas Hescott, December 2023

98%

98% saying they have a sense of belonging.



A message from our CEO & Artistic Director

Brighton People's Theatre went from strength to strength in our first 18 months operating as a charity.

Our artistic work

We ran a successful **workshop and rehearsal programme** of 189 workshops, attended by 303 people, who attended a total of 1669 times in council estates and community centres across the City. Workshops involved hundreds of people most of whom we had never met before.

82%

82% had never done theatre before.

100%

100% of people involved in our work would recommend us to a friend.

We developed **two original show ideas**; Born and Bread and The Songbird Café . Both of these shows grew out of our workshop programme and were co-created between professional artists and our participants.

Our team

We moved from a team of freelancers to a team of staff on PAYE. This was a huge change for us, enabling the core team to have a sense of stability only dreamed of a few years earlier, particularly as we now have two artists on payroll. We are hugely grateful to our main funder, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, whose support has enabled this to happen. Their ongoing support had been game-changing.

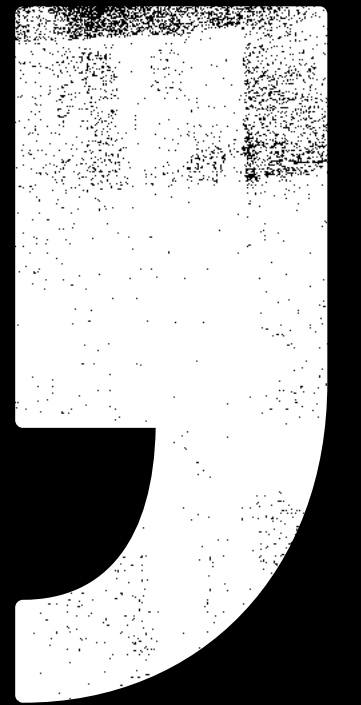
We have created work for 12 freelance artists in a wide variety of roles; Guest Directors, Sound Designers, Set Designers, Composers and Writers. Their input into our creative practice and feedback on our way of working has been invaluable in enabling us to learn and grow as an organisation.

Our reflections

Our learning has been broad and deep over the past 18 months. This has been enabled by a robust evaluation framework that we have implemented with the support of an independent evaluator. We are able to adapt and change how we work as we learn.

The positive impact on people's lives is clear to see from the felt sense in the room during our workshops and the powerful testimonials from people we work with. They are why we do what we do. I hope that this report gives you a sense of what we have achieved and where we are heading. I'm looking forward to continuing to lead this organisation into the future and seeing what more BPT magic unfolds.

Naomi Alexander, December 2023



The BPT Story...

We are a theatre company that brings people together. Owned and loved by the people of Brighton. We make our work over a cup of coffee, a shared story, a workshop, a show, a magical world appearing in a local park.

Who we are

Brighton People’s Theatre was started by Naomi Alexander in 2015 out of a desire to create theatre in a way that was more relevant and accessible to everyone. Brighton People’s Theatre is open to everyone in the Greater Brighton area who is over 18 and doesn’t earn their living as a professional artist. Everyone is welcome, however, we prioritise our resources on ensuring that people with the lowest socioeconomic status can get involved. We think this is the fairest way of organising what we do. We pay childcare and bus fares for those who need it so they can join in.

Brighton People’s Theatre
Annual Report Oct 2021 – Mar 2023



93%

93% of our participants have increased their knowledge of theatre.

Why we exist

Theatre should bring people together but analysis of the Arts Council’s own Taking Part data shows that public subsidy of the arts reinforces and recreates social division.

Our research led by communities in Brighton shows that people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often feel excluded from publicly subsidised arts. Research led by the Warwick Commission shows that it is the most wealthy, least ethnically diverse and most well educated 8% of the population who are the main consumers and producers of publicly subsidised arts.

We think this is a social justice issue and we want to change it.

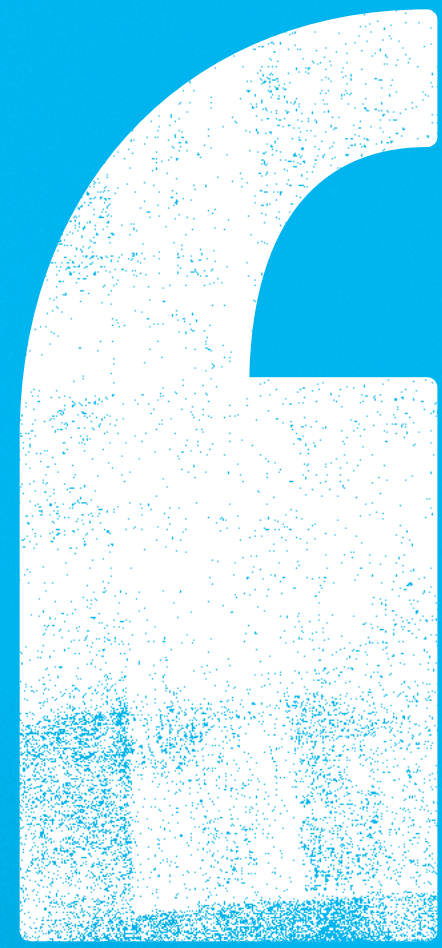
Our Team

CEO and Artistic Director Naomi Alexander
Executive Director Marina Norris (left Dec 2021)
Company Manager Fran Masey O’Neil
Associate Director Jack Parris
Communications Manager Niamh Hicks
Workshop Administrator Sofia Goghru
Workshop Administrator Zara Nolan

Our Trustees

Thomas Hescott Chair
Helen Rice Vice-Chair
Jenni Lewin-Turner
Munya Muchati
Lily Einhorn
Paul Hughes
Anna Jefferson



A large, stylized white opening quotation mark on a blue background.

Our Vision and Mission is simple

We bring people in Brighton Together...
...to play, to laugh, to create, to think, to talk,
to perform, to applaud, to agree, to disagree,
to empathise, to sing, to dance, to cry, to listen,
to learn, to connect, to understand, to be
understood, to be seen, to belong, to trust,
to be part of something bigger than ourselves.

A large, stylized white closing quotation mark on a blue background.

Key Achievements...

Workshop programme

In October 2021, BPT started its drop-in workshops to provide a space to play and connect in neighbourhoods across the City. We delivered weekly workshops in Whitehawk, Moulsecoomb, Portslade and the City Centre.

All workshops were Pay What You Decide and provided a space for participants to take creative risks while meeting like-minded people in their community. Over this 18 month period, we began playing games, and then began co-creating and devising work for the stage based on the theme of: ‘Right to Speak - Finding our Voice’.



Brighton People’s Theatre
Annual Report Oct 2021 – Mar 2023

As the Covid-19 pandemic and successive lockdowns began to fade, by October 2021 we were fully back to working in a physical space. However, our monitoring data suggested people were experiencing high levels of mental health challenge, exacerbated by the isolation of the pandemic.

78%

A staggering 78% of our cohort reported experiencing mental health challenges including anxiety, depression, ADHD, PTSD, agoraphobia and addiction.

10% reported physical challenges including chronic fatigue, chronic pain and restricted mobility, whilst 12% report a lack of confidence, low self-esteem and identity issues post lockdown (bereavement, addiction and isolation).



139

We ran 139 workshops, attended by 137 people, 815 times.

Our weekly workshops were a place of creativity and connection for lots of new people who had never done anything like this before. Participants from these workshops subsequently got involved in the development of Songbird Café and Born and Bread.

“Something about being part of that process with all the other people in it - gave me such pleasure and yes it has increased my confidence - and my confidence in all of us- that we all can really do this. Together. With the help of the magical process that is BPT.”
—
Weekly workshop participant

“

It's given me a sense of hope and inspiration again, I'd lost my way for a number of years and it has reignited my inspiration for pursuing my dreams but also focusing on things which make my soul happy!

”

The Songbird Café

Between January and July 2022 we successfully put into practise our model of co-creation by delivering a Research and Development (R&D) process for our new show The Songbird Café .



The Songbird Café will be a family friendly musical. The idea behind it is to explore the crisis in mental health, loneliness and isolation which our members have said is the most pressing theme they want to explore. However, The Songbird Café will be a magical, uplifting experience for all the family.

“Having all your ideas used in such a lovely way is very empowering. My mind woke up, it was as if old chambers had been suddenly re opened and treasures discovered. The sense of well-being this delivered was so incredible. Each session took me out of my ‘everyday’ into the utterly absorbing, oh so professional world of BPT.”

—
The Songbird Café participant

The R&D process was run by a creative team of four who each led the development of their artform in collaboration with BPT’s Artistic Director Naomi Alexander. The R&D process brought together participants and artists to co-create the world of The Songbird Café and developed ideas for the plot, the characters, the dances, the costume and the set design.



We are applying for development funding to continue work in co-creating The Songbird Café and hope to be able to stage it at Brighton Festival at some point in the future.

26

We ran 26 workshops, attended by 94 people, 225 times.

182

We received 182 expressions of interest from people across the BN postcode area who wanted to get involved in the R&D. 87% of these were from people completely new to BPT.



Born and Bread

In Spring 2022 Brighton People's Theatre had conversations with more than 100 people across the City about food, belonging and what it means to call Brighton 'home'.



From Bangkok to Bevendean. Whitehawk to Mexico City. The stories painted a picture of the City from a perspective never seen before.

"Inspiring, energising, fun, illuminating, challenging, friendly, and playful."

Using these stories as source material, we ran a six week workshop programme to develop the themes of the show. In April 2022 BPT Associate Director Jack Parris and Guest Director, Tanushka Marah, collated these stories into a script, with dramaturgical support from Naomi Alexander. The first draft script was rehearsed in 6 weeks over June and July.

"Made me feel like I can really make a difference. That I can contribute."

We staged a work in progress sharing in July 2022 to a sell-out audience at the Attenborough Centre for Creative Arts with a cast of 30 non-professional actors who took roles as Bakers in a community kitchen. Most of the cast had never performed in something like this before. The stories were served (along with a hot bowl of soup and roll of bread) to an ACCA audience of 120 people.

165

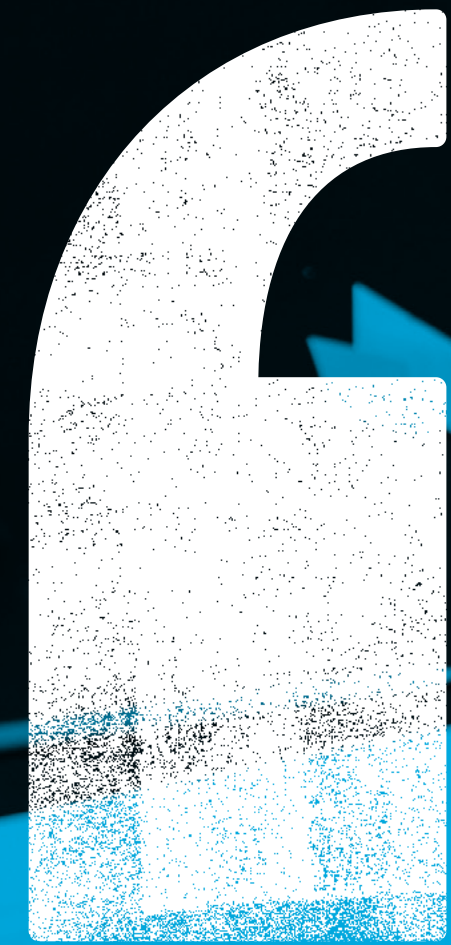
We ran 165 workshops and rehearsals, attended by 87 people, 629 times.



"Just like bread, it (Born and Bread) has taken the raw ingredients of sometimes very raw actors, and brought out unexpected talents in a brilliant way – and it has given each of us a new joy, and a feeling of connectedness in a City that is sometimes very lonely. And there is no greater joy than making other people happy – BPT does all that and more."

— Born and Bread participant)

From September 2022 - February 2023, BPT ran a series of workshops with the original Born and Bread cast, to test new material and develop the original script, while Jack and Naomi worked with dramaturg Lou Cope to rework the script. In March 2023 we ran a casting evening which saw 60 people auditioning for 30 roles in our big baker chorus.



“

As a stay at home mum, it felt really good to connect with people I wouldn't normally connect with, and to do something new and out of my comfort zone. Always felt uplifted when leaving the sessions.

”

Our development...

In January 2022 we took some time out to reflect on what Brighton People's Theatre could set out to achieve.



We worked with Ned Glasier from Company Three in London who facilitated a reflective process with the CEO Naomi Alexander, the Board and the staff team to co-create the business plan for the next three years. The process gave us a clear vision and mission: To bring people together to be part of something bigger than ourselves.

Brighton People's Theatre
Annual Report Oct 2021 – Mar 2023

The Business Plan

The business plan sets out our vision for evolving the work of the charity from April 2023 - March 2026. It has enabled us to articulate our methodology for co-creating work between professional and non professional artists and set out clear, measurable objectives for organisational development.

We worked with a Communications Company, Baxter & Bailey, to design and produce the Business Plan in an engaging, easy to read format that could sit on our website for new funders to read. We involved our members in producing a short film that communicates the essence of our vision for use on our website and social media.



Sitting underneath the Business Plan, are a range of other documents that the team have evolved in response to our learning.

1

A Communications Plan

That clearly articulates the rationale for communicating clear messages to different stakeholders, using a range of tried and tested approaches.

4

A Way of Being Plan

That explains our organisational values (Open, Playful, Fearless and Respectful) and details the behaviours that we expect staff and freelancers to display as a result of living these values.

2

An Activity Plan

That shows the artistic, organisational and communications milestones that are needed to deliver the business plan.

5

An Evaluation and Learning Plan

That explains the detail of our approach to capturing, analysing and communicating the rich lessons that will inevitably arise as we embark on delivering the activity over the next three years.

3

A Fundraising Plan

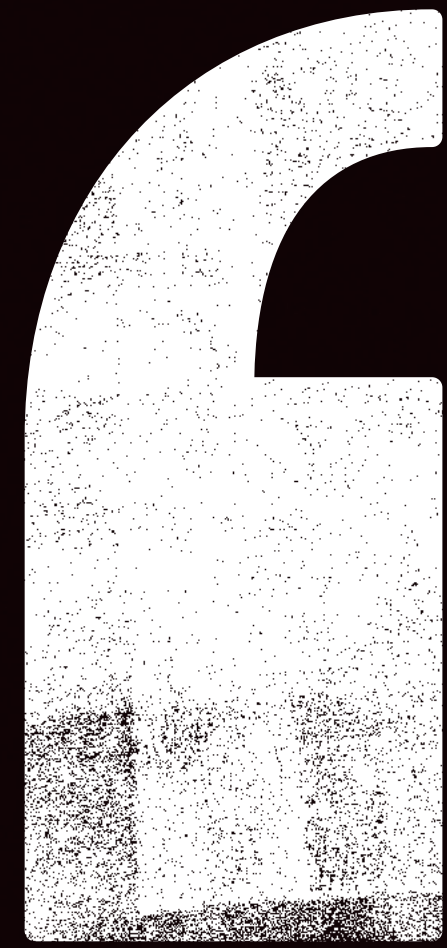
That articulates the approach to diversifying our income and has identified specific funders to approach in specific timeframes.

6

The BPT Methodology

An overview of the process we take to co-create new shows: the why, what and how of our approach that we can share with people who are involved so they can easily understand where their contribution fits.





I

absolutely love the weekly workshops. They are so varied and interesting, I learn a lot but also have such a laugh when I am there. I feel like I can play as an adult which doesn't happen often.

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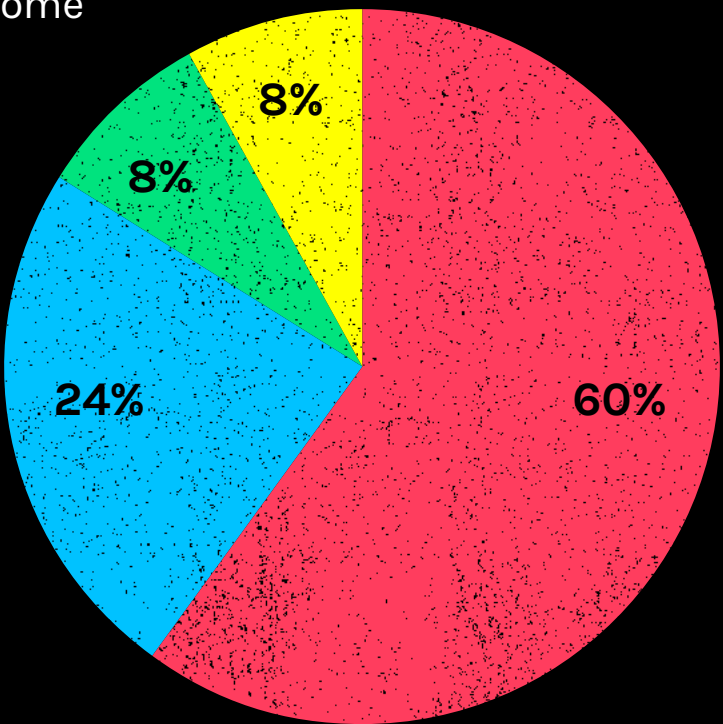
Funding and Finance

Over this first 18 month period of operating as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Brighton People’s Theatre had a...

- Total income of £258,230
- Total expenditure of £258,144
- It holds 3 months running costs of £19,000 in reserves

Income

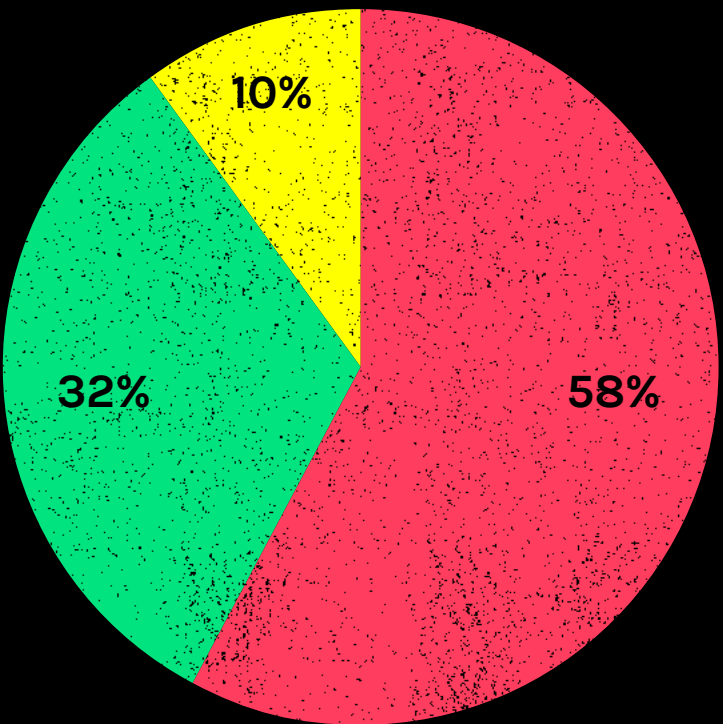
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation
- Arts Council England
- Small Grants
- Earned Income



We are very grateful for the continued support from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Arts Council England without which we would not have been able to operate over the last 18 months. We are also grateful to the Chalk Cliff Trust, Chichester University, Kickstarter Placement, Pride Community Foundation, Sussex Community Foundation, the City Council and Brighton Dome and Festival for supporting us with a range of small grants and commissions. We are pleased that we managed to maintain 8% of our income as earned income.

Expenditure

- Staffing costs
- Artistic expenditure
- Organisational running cost



Trustee statement

The trustees present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31st March 2023. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

Public benefit

Brighton People’s Theatre recognises and celebrates the creativity inherent in everyone. We want to build and sustain mutually beneficial, collaborative relationships with people living in the City. We place a special emphasis on involving those who have had the fewest opportunities to make and consume publicly funded culture.

We believe in the intrinsic value of the arts and culture and want to extend this value to as many people as possible. We also want to democratise the way the arts are funded, produced and consumed in the UK.

Governing document

Brighton People’s Theatre is a registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and is governed by its constitution.

Over the next few years we are planning to further diversify our income streams.

Our full annual accounts are available on request and on the Charity Commission website.

Reference and Administration details

Registered Charity Number	1196082
Registered Office	Age Uk 29 Prestonville Road Brighton BN2 3PG
Independent examiner	F1 CRT Limited Flat 24 Wellingtonia Court Laine Close Brighton BN1 6TD

Interview with...



What is your name?

Maya Rezk.

How old are you?

29 years old.

Where were you born?

Syria, in Damascus.

Where do you live now?

In Brighton.

What is your job?

I am a care worker.

How did you first find out about BPT?

First I found out about it as someone suggested it to me at the Jollof Cafe (a cafe run by refugees), I was a bit scared to come along because of my language abilities in English.

What were your first impressions?

It was very welcoming and I found it to be free, everyone respected each other and accepted each other. To be honest, I just felt like I was part of this group, like I knew these people.

What have you done with BPT?

First I came along to the drop in workshops every Thursday for about a year. Then I auditioned for Born and Bread and I have also been involved in the steering group for Mabrouk, a new show about celebrations made with people with heritage from Arabic speaking countries.

What impact has BPT had on your life?

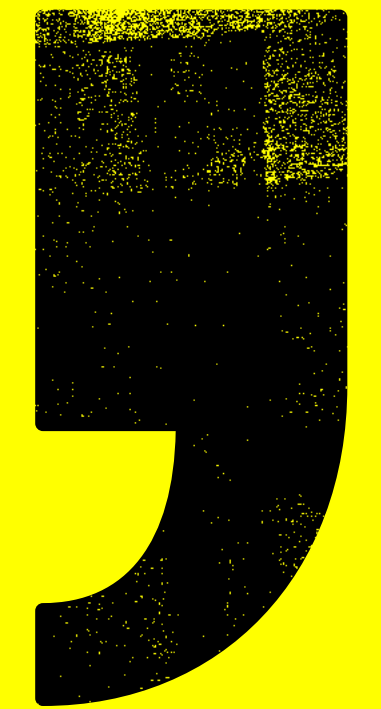
BPT has given me hope to be in the theatre again. It has given me confidence, to share my ideas and to be more open. I have made a lot of friends through BPT. I love them so much and we keep in touch every day.

Before you joined BPT had you ever done anything like this before?

I studied acting in Syria and had done workshops before. I did voice dubbing in Syria - that was my main job. So it's really brilliant to get back into it.

Is there anything else you want to say?

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for being a part of this group.



Interview with...



What is your name?

Paul Hughes.

How old are you?

64 years old.

Where were you born?

Whitehawk, in Brighton.

Where do you live now?

Whitehawk, in Brighton.

What is your job?

I am an engineer at the hospital.

How did you first find out about BPT?

I first found out about it when I met Naomi (BPT's CEO) at a community event in Whitehawk. She told me all about BPT and I decided to come along and give it a try. I'd always fancied doing a bit of theatre but hadn't known where to go.

What were your first impressions?

It was a good laugh. Nice, friendly people. I liked it.

What have you done with BPT?

What don't I do?! I started coming along to the drop-in workshops pre-pandemic. Then we were on bloody zoom for a year. After that I got involved in Born and Bread, in The Songbird Café and I am now on the Board of Trustees at BPT.

What impact has BPT had on your life?

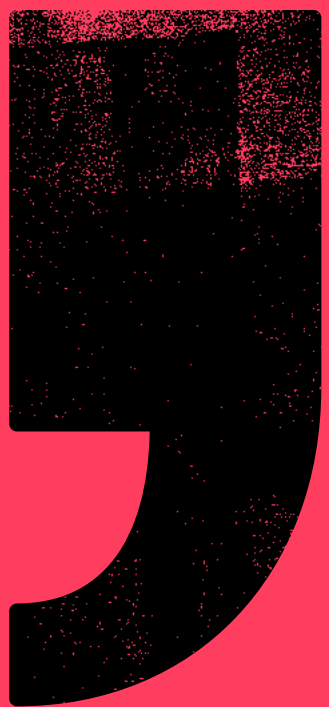
No matter what I go to, it always takes me to a happier place. And because I am part of BPT I also got to perform with ThirdSpace Theatre in the Brighton Festival - a fantastic opportunity thanks to BPT's networks.

Before you joined BPT had you ever done anything like this before?

I had done a few skits for a laugh when I was in the army but nothing else since I was at school.

Is there anything else you want to say?

If you're unsure about coming along, give it a go. You won't regret it.



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hello@brightonpeoplestheatre.org

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