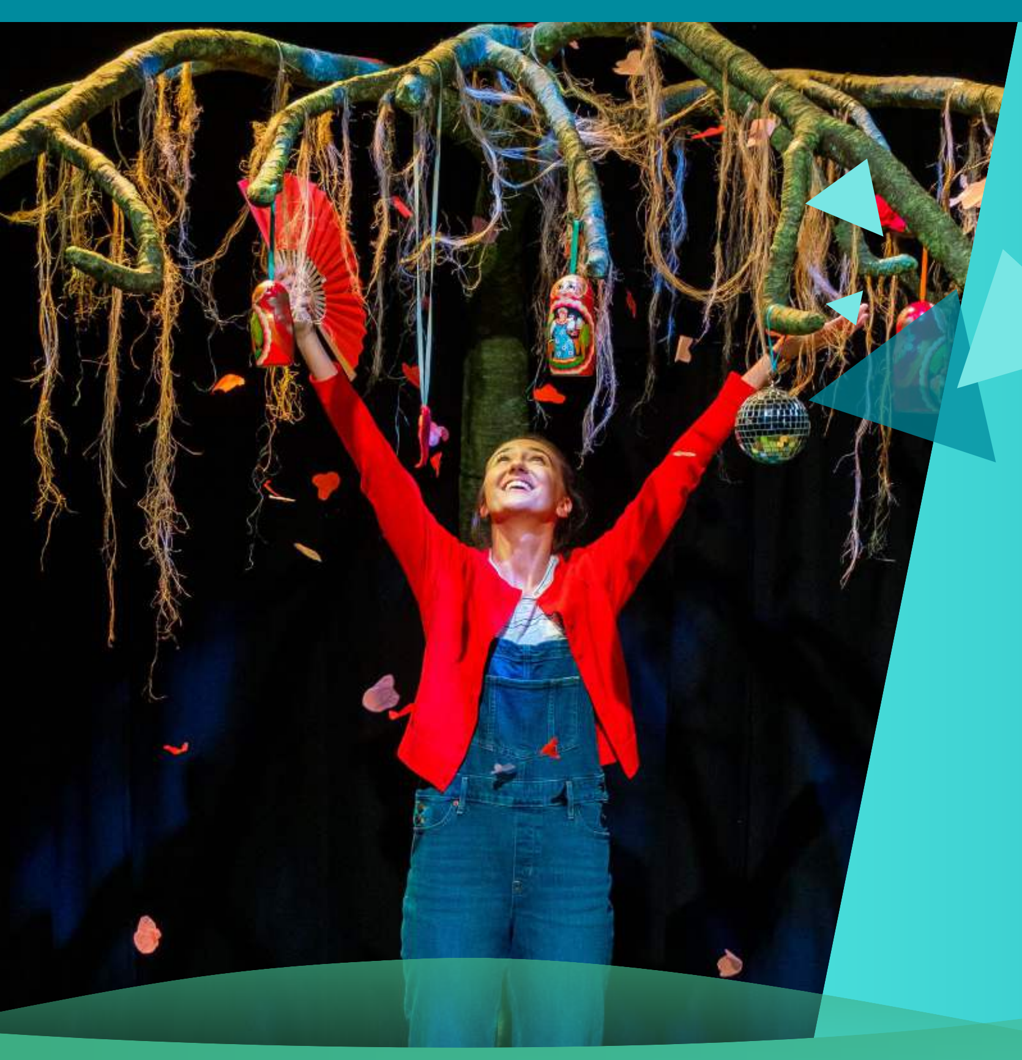

m6 theatre company

Impact Report

2022/23

The Difference We Made

Bouncing back after the pandemic with optimism and making sure theatre experiences remain accessible to all children and young people have been at the heart of M6's activity during the year.

Children, young people and their families living in Rochdale remain our priority, alongside working with our partners to play a key role in the development of a vibrant local cultural community whilst maintaining our national touring profile and our vital place in the ecology of Performance for Young Audiences.

Our original productions have been more warmly received in local schools than ever before. As life returned to normal, we noticed a renewed appreciation of the power of theatre to positively impact young minds and our valued theatre venue partners applauded our work which continued to move, inspire and reward audiences of all ages.

To ensure theatre remains accessible to ALL audiences, particularly during the emerging cost of living crisis, we maximised a range of access initiatives including subsidised rates for schools, pay-what-you-feel performances in our studio theatre and bursaries for youth theatre participants.

Our amazing extended family of youth theatre members continued to reconnect after months of isolation, recovering together, making new friends, learning new skills and delighting their parents and carers at performances of their own new stories.

Internally, M6 has undergone a transition over the last year. Our long-standing Managing Director/Joint CEO Debs Palmer stepped down after 17 years with the company, but continues to support in a Strategic Advisor capacity. We thank Debs for her extraordinary commitment to M6 over the years, helping to cement our place as leaders in our field. We are pleased to welcome Laura Rodwell in her role as our new Managing Director. Artistic Director Gilly Baskeyfield has taken on sole CEO responsibilities.

We worked hard to achieve our aims this year:

- Make ambitious, original theatre with, for and by children and young people that is engaging, has depth, is multi-layered and nurtures empathy, respect and emotional literacy
- Ensure our work includes, reaches and is relevant to our local community in Rochdale and similar communities across the UK
- Build on our 45-year track record of using theatre as a tool for positive change that unlocks the potential of children and young people and responds to the challenges of living in contemporary Britain and the modern world
- Champion diversity and nurture creative talent, especially underrepresented artists and new voices in theatre
- Expand our reach and enrich our impact by listening to and respectfully learning from a diverse range of collaborative partners, children and adult experts and actively contribute to Rochdale's Priority Place agenda
- Use our position to address the biggest challenges of our time – environmental responsibility, cultural entitlement, wellbeing and inclusion

This report captures and shares the output and impact of the past year but none of this could have been achieved without the amazing people we work with. We thank our dedicated and highly skilled core staff, freelance artists, board members, partners and funders for their resilience, adaptability and commitment.

As we move forward in Rochdale Borough, at a time of enormous economic challenges for local families, we pledge to play our part in maximising the potential of Arts Council England Priority Place investment and partnerships to collectively make a positive difference to the lives of local children and young people through excellent creative engagement.

Gilly Baskeyfield
Artistic Director/CEO

Simon Whitehead
Chair

Our Year in Numbers

4 Productions Toured

1 Residency

6 Youth Theatre Productions

42 Schools Engaged

60 Speech Bubbles Participants

138 Arts Awards Awarded

164 Performances across the UK

26 Talent Development Sessions

1034 Children Participated in Linking Schools

10 Youth Theatre Performances

8,401 Live Audience Members

142 Youth Theatre and Outreach Participants

34 Paid Opportunities for Freelancers

2,844 Online Audience Members

Highlights

We continued our tour of **Pebble on the Beach** in association with The North Wall, Oxford, which originally started in January 2022. The play and its themes of overcoming fear resonated with post-Covid audiences.

Our much-loved production of **Sunflowers and Sheds** toured to local primary schools and national venues including The Lowry, Lyric Hammersmith and The Rep, Birmingham. This was a poignantly timed remount as one of the characters is of Ukrainian heritage and misses her family. We hosted a community performance at M6 Studio to raise money for the Pakistani Flood Appeal and closed the tour with a fundraiser performance for the Ukrainian Appeal at Rochdale Ukrainian Centre.

Children from culturally different backgrounds in 25 Rochdale primary schools came to M6 Studio to watch **Sunflowers and Sheds**. They took part in workshops as part of the Rochdale Linking Schools project, building respect and understanding and creating their "wishes for the world".

Our production of **The Street Where I Live**, toured to primary schools, nurseries and community spaces across the Rochdale borough. After enjoying these stories of warmth and friendship in a diverse community, each child received a free, specially created storybook to take home and share with their friends and family.

As part of our Talent Development programme, M6 supported Chrissy Jones, an emerging artist living with a learning disability. Her new production, **Shadow Girl Origins**, toured to Manchester libraries and community centres, Mind The Gap (Bradford) and M6 Studio.

Working in partnership with **Barnardo's**, we supported young people living with a disability to participate in our **Act to Shine** youth theatre group. Through weekly drama-based sessions, the young people explored and shared their relationship with the online world to create **Tik Tok Boom!** in April 2022. In the summer term, the group participated in a puppetry workshop which led to them commissioning puppets to be made for **Forest Fables** in March 2023.

> The best school trip I've taken part in for over 14 years! It has had a major impact on me as a teacher."
>
> **Teacher on Rochdale Linking Schools Project**

Four local **youth theatre groups** continued to participate in weekly drama-based workshops, resulting in three shows: **Random Acts**, **The Island** and **Four Villains, Three Stories and a Bunch of Nomads**. The Year 11-13 group participated in National Theatre Connections, performing **Remote** at M6 Studio and HOME.

We continued to deliver **Speech Bubbles** in three local primary schools. This drama-based programme supports children in KS1 to develop their communication skills. Teachers noticed improvements back in class in 90% of the children.

> M6 is a safe environment away from their school issues which they look forward to every week."
>
> **Parent/Carer, Youth Theatre**

Working with Community Arts North West, Petrus and Hopwood Hall College, we celebrated **Rochdale Women's Voices**, creating a short film to showcase the creativity and power of women in Rochdale.

As cultural partner of the **Comino Poet in Residence** Project, we worked with a group of Falinge Park students to create poetry inspired by The Street Where I Live. These poems were shared at a celebration event and will be displayed in the Manchester Poetry Library. To commemorate the King's Coronation, some budding poets collaborated to create a bookmark poem that was shared with 40,000 children across the borough.

In November 2022 we were granted an uplift in funding from Arts Council England and remain in their **National Portfolio of Organisations** for 2023 - 2026; a testament to the value of M6's work.

We continued to support other artists/companies and talent including seed funding for Stute Theatre to create their new show, Cardboard Cosmos. We also supported two organisations with their ACE bids and held a talent development session for facilitators.

> Fail to engage small children for even a second and you've lost them completely. It is a real art - as M6 demonstrated with aplomb'
>
> **Lyn Gardner, The Stage**

Money

Earned Income/ Donations
£47,376

Revenue Funding
£202,987

Premises Costs/In Kind Support
£58,135

Income 2022-23
£487,495

Project Grants
£60,770

Theatre Tax Relief
£118,227

Artistic & Participatory Programme
£269,986

Premises Costs
£69,333

Governance
£6,801

Expenditure 2022-23
£570,782

Core Costs
£224,662

Reserves Carried Forward
£412,504*

Restricted: £37,863
Designated: £115,000
General: £259,641

Planned Deficit
£83, 287

Reserves Brought Forward
£495,791

*A full set of audited accounts is available on request.

Future Plans

Nest

Ages 3+

A bird's eye view of the humans. Touring to schools in summer 2023 and to national venues in the autumn.

The Incident

A new Curriculum for Life piece for secondary aged pupils looking at themes of consent and misogyny.

Digital Programme Launch

Launch our digital extant Curriculum for Life productions, The Storm, Clueless and Hench, to secondary school and youth support organisations.

> By paying strong attention to children and young people's participation, it's clear that they get a huge amount from the sessions. Thank you for your continued work, it is a privilege to support it."
>
> **Chris Turner, Children in Need**

> We need more M6 in this big bad world"

> Our first family theatre trip - AMAZING!"
>
> **Audience members on Sunflowers and Sheds**

People and Partners Who Made Our Year

Adam Carree Alan Hamer Aleesha Neill Alice Bunker-Whitney Alice Rowbottom Andrew Kim Anna Friel Caroline Kennedy Courtney Hayles Danielle Frame Deborah Palmer Declan Wilson Dot Wood MBE Eleanor Samson Emily Spowage Fiona Fogarty Gareth Dennison Gilly Baskeyfield Guy Hargreaves Hannah Murrary James Taylor Jane Cox Jen Harris Jenni Morris Jill Welsby Joss Matzen Laura Rodwell Lauren Dixon Lauren Harden Leah Llewellyn Leah Wild Leighton Wise Lewis Wileman Liz Mytton Luke Walker Maria Major Mark Melville Mark Starbuck Maya Szlachetko Muhammad Abdulaleem Muriel Gott Nan Jackson Nasrine Akhtar Nicola McRoy Nigel Gloudon Rachel McBride Rachel Pauline Riana Duce Riz Ali Robin Parker Sarah Nelson Shannon Wild Sharon McWilliams Simon DeCourcey Simon Whitehead Simone Lewis Sue Johnstone OBE Tayo Akinbode Tony Jackson Zara Nunn Alice Ingham RC Primary School Alkrington Library Alkrington Primary School All Saints CE Primary School Arc, Stockton Arts Council England Arts Depot Ashfield Valley Primary School Back of the Moss Community Centre Barnardo's BBC Children in Need Belfield Community Primary School Beswick Library Blackburn Market Bowlee Park Community Primary School Brimrod Community Primary School Broadfield Primary School Bury Met Caldershaw Primary School Cartwheel Arts Castleton Primary School Claremont Primary School Comino Foundation Community Arts North West Contact Theatre Coppice Primary Academy Culturapedia Culture House Curious Minds Darwen Market Deeplish Community Centre Deeplish Primary Academy Falinge Park High School Forum Library Gorse Hill Studio Greenbank Primary School Guildhall Arts Centre Hamer CP School Healey Primary School Heywood Civic Centre Heywood Library Holy Family RC Primary School HOME Hopwood Community Primary School Hopwood Hall College Kentmere Primary Academy LGBT Foundation Little Gems Nursery Littleborough Library Lyric Hammersmith Manchester Central Library Marland Hill Community Primary School Middleton Library Mind The Gap Moorhouse Academy National Theatre Connections Newhey Community Primary School Octagon, Bolton Our Lady & St. Paul's RC Primary School People's History Museum Petrus Proud and Loud Rochdale Borough Council Rochdale Borough Culture Network Rochdale Central Library Rochdale Children's University Rochdale Culture Compact Rochdale Culture Co-op Rochdale LCEP Rochdale Libraries Rochdale Ukrainian Society Sandbrook Community Primary School Scartho Methodist Church Hall Skylight Circus Smallbridge Library Smithy Bridge Primary School Speech Bubbles Spotland Primary School Springside School St. Gabriel's RC Primary School St. John CE Primary School St. John Fisher RC Primary School St. Luke's CE Primary School St. Margaret's CE Primary School St. Mary's RC Primary School, Langley St. Mary's RC Primary School, Littleborough St. Michael's Bamford Primary School St. Peter's CE Primary School St. Peter's Church Hall St. Thomas CE Primary School Stamford Arts Centre Stute Theatre The Growth Company The Lowry The Manchester Guardian Society The National Linking Network The North Wall The Rep, Birmingham The Star Tree Studio Touchstones Walsden St. Peter's CE School Woodland Community Primary School Wyatt Morris Golland Your Trust

A very special thank you goes to former M6 Vice Chair Robin Parker, who sadly passed away earlier this year. We are incredibly grateful to Robin for his friendship and support over the years.

M6 Theatre Company

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