



The Arts Foundation Futures Awards

PRESS RELEASE

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The Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2022 for Theatre-Makers: Finalists Announced

The Arts Foundation announce the four finalists of The Arts Foundation Futures Awards (AFFA) 2022 for Theatre-Makers, supported by The Maria Björnson Memorial Fund.

Lee Hart, Anna Himali Howard, Helen Monks and Matt Woodhead (LUNG) and Conrad Murray have been selected from a long list of nominated artists as finalists for the £10,000 Arts Foundation Futures Award 2022 in Theatre-Makers.

The Theatre-Makers award focuses on artists whose practice centers on participatory and co-created theatre. With all the practitioners harnessing and creating innovative and original performative work - asking big questions and pushing the boundaries of theatre and cross-disciplinary practice.

The AFFA 2022 Theatre-Makers Judges are: Director of Creativity and Social Change at Battersea Arts Centre, Liz Moreton; Director of Kate Pakenham Productions, Kate Pakenham; and Artistic Director and CEO of New Art Exchange, Saad Eddine Said, who says:

"Recently, Theatre Makers have paved the way in terms of socially engaged, participatory & co-created practice. Their innovative work reached communities and individuals all over the nation when it was most needed. Our four finalists stood out as extremely inspiring leaders in the field of co-creation. They give me hope for a better and more inclusive future."

Lee Hart is a director, deviser, and practitioner, making ambitious theatre experiences with, and for, some of the hardest to reach members of our communities. Since 2012 Lee has developed, delivered, and creatively directed the Our Space project - a theatre-making programme working with adults who may have faced challenges involving homelessness, isolation, mental health issues, substance misuse or re-offending. Our Space is a large-scale creative programme working in the community, in the theatre, and making public work with artists with lived experience. In 2019 Lee formed Voodoo Monkeys with Our Space participant Jason Brownlee. The company is currently rehearsing *Today I Killed My Very First Bird* - written by Jason and based on his experiences of childhood trauma, violence, addiction, and redemption. In 2022 Voodoo Monkeys

will begin work on a new project with Iranian born Fariboz Ferridouni, a survivor of the Iran/Iraq war and political exile, living in Plymouth.

Anna Himali Howard is a director, theatremaker and dramaturg. She directs co-created shows with a focus on active listening - creating fun, challenging creative spaces for participants, listening to what emerges, and then giving that material a dramaturgical framework that makes it sing. Inspired by community spaces, diaspora and moments of connection, Anna's work often draws on the aesthetics of libraries, church halls, or function rooms. She was chosen to collaborate with teenage climate change activists in Gloucester to create *I Stand For What I Stand On* (2021). Prompting the cast to create their own materials in writing and performance, the show is performed into the audience's headphones, giving the young activists a rare opportunity to be heard without having to shout. Anna's work has been staged at theatres including the Bush Theatre, the Gate Theatre, the Orange Tree and Birmingham REP. She was a Creative Associate at the Gate Theatre and is currently an Associate Artist at Brixton House.

Helen Monks and Matt Woodhead's campaign-led verbatim theatre company **LUNG** uses people's actual words to tell their stories and make hidden voices heard. LUNG tours work nationally to advocate and campaign against political, social and economic inequalities in modern Britain. In 2016, LUNG worked in collaboration with four local young carers to amplify their voice. 70% of young carers are hidden - meaning their caring duties are unknown with no recognition or support. *Who Cares* toured school and youth zone venues across the UK, performing to over 8,000 children and young people. The play was broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and 200 hidden young carers were identified and signposted to support as a direct result of seeing the show. In 2018, *E15* responded to the events of 19th October 2013, in which 29 sheltering single mothers and children in East London got an eviction letter from Newham Council. Faced with forced relocation out of London, the young mums fought back. In collaboration with the real-life mums and campaign group, LUNG co-created a piece of agitprop theatre that confronted the social housing crisis and celebrated how one group of women refused to be marginalised.

Conrad Murray began his work in hip hop theatre on discovering he was unable to find books, shows or practitioners that related to his creativity and experience. Growing up on a south London council estate, Conrad was immersed in a community of many different demographics and felt actively excluded from mainstream theatre cultures. Starting his hip hop theatre company in 2006 with like-minded individuals from similar backgrounds, The Beatbox Academy is a home-grown performance collective for artists aged 8-29 years, pro-actively engaging with harder to reach groups in areas of significant deprivation in Wandsworth. In 2018 Conrad formed The 'Frankenstein' collective - their show *Frankenstein: How to Make a Monster* interprets Mary Shelley's novel from their perspective as young people growing up in 21st-century Britain. The show was adapted for television with BBC Channel 4 in 2020. In March 2022 Conrad is releasing 'Making hip hop theatre-Beatbox and Elements' with Bloomsbury, and an anthology of three of his plays titled 'Beats & Elements: A hip hop theatre trilogy'.

The Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2022 supports and celebrates artists for both their work to date and future development. The recipient of the £10,000 award for Theatre-Makers will be announced along with awards in four other artforms (Animation, Materials Innovation, Music for Change, and Visual Arts) at a celebration event in late January 2022 - with all finalists receiving £1,000 awards towards their artistic practice.

Mary Jane Edwards, Interim Director of The Arts Foundation says:

“Given the ongoing precarity across the arts and culture sector, and with theatre so severely impacted by the pandemic, we are really pleased to be able to offer unconditional financial support in this way. Co-created theatre and participatory work of any kind often require long research, development and collaboration processes, and we hope the support of The Arts Foundation will make a contribution to sustaining the artists’ vital work.”

Theatre-Makers Judge, Kate Pakenham added:

“The passion and commitment which each of the finalists has to make work which puts participation and co-creation at its core is massively energising. As theatre rebuilds its place in the hearts and minds of audiences, this kind of work - which is so fundamentally about community building - is more valuable than ever. And when it asks big questions, as each of these artists is doing, it has the opportunity to effect both personal and cultural change for audiences at large.”

The Theatre-Makers award is made possible by The Maria Björnson Memorial Fund, which was set up in honour of Maria Björnsonan, an extraordinary and innovative designer working across theatre, ballet and opera.

To find out more about the artists and all AFFA 2022 finalists, please visit The Arts Foundation website: artsfoundation.co.uk/affas/2022/

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INFORMATION

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PRESS PACK & IMAGES

The AFFA 2022 Theatre-Makers Press Pack and Artist Images* can be viewed [here](#).

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About The Arts Foundation

The Arts Foundation is a registered charity that supports individual artists and creatives in the UK with no strings attached financial support. Since 1993 the Arts Foundation has given nearly £2 million to creatives across the spectrum of the Arts.

The Arts Foundation Futures Awards (AFFA) gives out five £10,000 fellowships every year, with all finalists each receiving £1,000. These are awarded based on past work and enable future development. Each year the awards focus on both broad and innovative art forms, across Craft, Design, Film, Literature, Material Innovation, Music, New Media, Performing and Visual Arts, and aim to highlight lesser-known areas of creative practice and include emerging multidisciplinary artists.

The contribution of the Arts Foundation Futures Awards to the Arts in the UK is demonstrated by its past Fellows, many of whom have become leaders in their respective art forms, including Wayne McGregor (1994), Alice Oswald (1996), Sarah Kane (1998), Asif Kapadia (2001), Ali Smith (2001), Rufus Norris (2002), Lynette Yiadom-Boakye (2006), and more recently, Simon Fujiwara (2009), Alice Birch (2014), Hollie McNish (2015), Evan Ifekoya (2017), Holly Hendry (2019), and Bethany Williams (2020).

www.artsfoundation.co.uk

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About The Maria Björnson Memorial Fund

The Maria Björnson Memorial fund was set up to honour the brilliant theatre, ballet and opera designer Maria Björnson who died in 2002. Her best-known design was for the Phantom of the Opera for which she received a plethora of awards, although she designed for many other organisations including the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre, the Royal Opera, the Royal Ballet, Glyndebourne Opera, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera, Sydney Opera, La Scala, in the West End and on Broadway. The fund also supports artistic enterprises, arts-related activities and individual artists in the UK.

www.mbmf.org.uk/