

Project Name	A Midsummer Night's Showcase in Bramley Park
Amount applied for	£500
Lead Organisation	Front Room Productions
Ward/Neighbourhood	Bramley & Stanningley

Community Plan Objective	Best City for health & Wellbeing Best City for Children & Young People Best City for Communities
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Project Summary

Introduction

I am applying for support towards FRP's Leeds Summer Shakespeare Season 2021. This project was originally scheduled for Summer 2020, but has been postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic; plans have been updated and adapted appropriately.

The project will consist of two strands: 1) Our Summer production at Temple Newsam Estate, an abridged and accessible adaptation of A Midsummer Night's Dream (AMND) performed in the Walled Garden (funded by Arts Council England). 2) Pop-up performances of our hour-long Shakespearean highlights show A Midsummer Night's Showcase (Showcase) in the weeks leading up to AMND, performed in a series of public parks across Leeds – including Bramley Park.

We are asking the Community Committee for some support towards the Showcase strand of this project, which will be rehearsed and performed as part of the wider, six-week project to take place in Leeds over Summer 2021.

The Project

FRP creates high-quality theatre for unusual and unexpected locations in Leeds, responding to specific sites and underscoring intimate storytelling with live music. Our aim is to create cultural experiences that can be enjoyed and understood by all, and our Summer Shakespeare 2021 will manifest this ethos.

Showcase will be performed in the lead up to our production of A Midsummer Night's Dream; pop up performances will take place in outdoor public spaces and will be free to attend:

- Saturday 3rd July 2021, Bramley Park, 2pm & 5pm
- Sunday 4th July 2021, Roundhay Park, 2pm & 5pm
- Saturday 10th July 2021, Middleton Park, 2pm & 5pm
- Sunday 11th July 2021, Potternewton Park, 2pm & 5pm

The Showcase is performed by eight actor-musicians, and will be supported by two Volunteers per performance. It will offer a free, easily accessible way for communities across Leeds, who may not necessarily have easy and local access to the arts, to engage with our work. The Showcase acts as a bite-sized, no risk introduction to Shakespeare, which we hope will encourage participants to consider sampling further performances in future, or, simply to enjoy for the first time some free and live theatre in their local park.

By performing in wide, open and outdoor spaces, social distancing will be easily enacted, particularly with the support given by Volunteers. We will use small coloured cones to set out 2m

distanced 'pitches' in front of each performance space, to ensure groups attending remain separate from each other.

Style

Our characteristic style combines live music, unique settings and high energy with the beauty of Shakespeare's original text. Delivered by skilled performers in a way that unearths modern day idiosyncrasies within the language, we aim to make Shakespeare a fun and relatable experience for all – from connoisseur to first-timer.

Showcase presents a medley of Shakespearean scenes, punctuated by live musical interludes featuring original arrangements of familiar pop songs, chosen to fit the context of the scene. The show runs at 60 minutes, and takes a dynamic format, with scenes selected at random by audience members. At the end of each scene, a cast member rings a bell, which signifies that a new scene needs to be picked. An audience member is then asked to point to a furred scroll; there are 12 scrolls in total, each with a different scene written within. The scene title is then read out (eg. Romeo and Juliet, Act 2 Scene 1, The Balcony Scene) before the troupe performs it.

Background and Planning

In Summer 2019, we trialled Showcase over the course of an evening at Temple Newsam Estate. This was a Pay What You Decide event that attracted over 200 audience members. The feedback showed that spectators enjoyed the sense of locality embedded in the piece, as well as feeling that they felt they'd seen an accessible Shakespearean performance, and for 9% of this audience the Showcase was their first experience of Shakespeare. There was particular enthusiasm for the participatory element of the show; spectators felt the bank of scenes and ability to perform them at random was impressive, and affirmed they'd had a high-quality experience from skilled performers.

The appropriate performance permissions have been submitted to and approved by the Events in Parks team.

When will the project run?

July 2021

Targets for the project and how success will be measured

Below are listed our Project Targets, and an outline of how we will evaluate their efficacy:

- Target: To produce intimate, engaging theatre that has been created specifically for the people of Leeds, with a distinct local relevance that members of the local community will find relatable and unique.
- Evaluation: we will evaluate this aspect via qualitative data, collected via feedback forms filled out by audience members at the end of the Showcase (pens & forms will be handed to audience members by Volunteers, who will regularly sanitise their hands, and be wearing masks). We will ask specifically about how personal and unique the experience felt.
- Target: Offer a risk-free way for new audiences to engage with Shakespeare, perhaps for the first time, with a view to encouraging repeat attendance.
- Evaluation: we will judge success via audience numbers (eg how many are present at the start of Showcase performances, and how many at the end); the form, asking whether the Showcase has impacted on spectators' desire to see more in future; via how many spectators come to see

AMND as a direct result of having seen the Showcase, which we will track via a question built into the booking process for AMND.

- Target: To create work for and reach audiences in areas of low arts engagement that don't have easily accessible local arts provision (eg the area that Bramley Park is situated in is one where 50% of the population are in the three Audience Segments least likely to engage in the arts according to Audience Agency statistics).
- Evaluation: judged via the form, asking audience members how often they attend the arts, and why they have attended the show. We will also track, via the form, whether the spectators came to the activity deliberately, or whether they were already in the park and were drawn in that way, and what the first part of their postcode is.
- Target: Contribute to the artistic development of audiences through the intimate and interactive nature of our work, by creating memorable artistic experiences on people's doorsteps.
- Evaluation: we will judge this via the individual longform comments of audiences on feedback forms about their overall experience of the show, and reactions to the show on social media, which will be encouraged at the end of each performance via a short speech.

How the project will be promoted and/or participation encouraged

I have outlined our promotional methods by three key target audiences: local community, families, and experience seekers.

Local communities: We will work with local ward representatives and Leeds City Council members with local insight to reach audiences in each area. We will also run a door-to-door print distribution campaign around residences and establishments close to our parks. We hope to work with specific media networks to help reach local audiences, namely South Leeds Life for Middleton Park. We will also engage in grassroots marketing, visiting in person and working with local community outlets, such as: Bramley Library, Bramley Elderly Action and Bramley Community Centre in West Leeds; Friends of Middleton Park and Slung Low in South Leeds; and Seven Arts, Chapeltown Arts and the Reginald Centre in North Leeds.

Families: Parks are often visited by families. A banner will be placed at each of the parks in the months preceding the performance to raise awareness of the Showcase via the natural footfall of the site - we have begun conversations with local authorities re permissions for this. We will also promote through links to local organisations engaging young people through contacts who have agreed to help us reach communities eg Arts @ Leeds. Large, colourful festival flags will be erected at the performance site, so that it can be seen from afar that some activity is taking place.

Experience seekers: We will build on our experience engaging non-typical theatregoing audiences at past productions – at 'Twelfth Night', 30% of spectators went to the theatre less than once every 6 months, and for a few audience members it was their first theatre experience. We will ensure the copy and marketing representation for the Showcase communicates the relaxed nature of the performances - it's a 'best bits', not a full Shakespeare play.

All of the above will also be reached via targeted social media advertising. We are confident in our ability to attract new and diverse audiences – 78% of 'Twelfth Night' audiences hadn't seen a Front Room show before, but 100% said they'd come to another.

Exit strategy/How the project will continue after the funding

It is our intention through the Summer Shakespeare 2021 Project to begin (or in some cases, continue) building a steady audience following in North, South, East and West Leeds. It is our hope that, after trialling this model in just four parks we will be able to work with Leeds City Council and funding partners to bring the Showcase to other wards of Leeds on a larger scale in future years. Front Room Productions isn't a core funded organisation, however we have had success in attracting commissions and grants from organisations that allow us, year on year, to continue our work in the city.

Any spectators will be encouraged to follow the company's activities after the Showcase – not only by coming to see AMND, for example, but also to sign up to our mailing list and social media channels in order to keep abreast of any opportunities or activities in their area in future. We will also sign post to other excellent, socially conscious arts organisations working within Leeds that provide opportunities to get involved in the arts (Interplay, Red Ladder) without having to pay through the nose or travel too far from home.

Other organisations involved

We have been in touch with members of Leeds City Council representing the various wards we wish to bring the Showcase to, in the interest of securing Leeds City Council as a key partner. Some of the members we have been in touch with are Cllr Angela Gabriel of the Inner South Communities Committee, Cllr Caroline Gruen of the ward for Bramley & Stanningley, and Arts Development Manager Ann Wishart. Each of these representatives affirmed a support of the Showcase in principle.

A key funding partner is Leeds Inspired, who have pledged a substantial amount of funding towards the project. Other partners are Leeds Libraries and the Lawrence Batley Theatre (where we will be supported with in-kind rehearsal space, as well as Red Ladder Theatre Company, which will also support on the administrative side).

Financial Information			
Revenue funding requested	£500		
Total cost of project	£11,417		
Match funding/Other funding sources	£10,917		
Available Funds in Group Bank Account			
Funding received since 2010			
Full Breakdown of Costs			
Item	Wellbeing	Other (with funding body)	Date of Decision
1500 x A5 Flyers = £50 (West Leeds Specific) = £50			
1 x Banner @ approx £45 + postage (West Leeds Specific) = £50			
Paid hours to distribute on foot in West Leeds (2 x people to distribute for 5 hours @ £12.50/hour) = £125			

2.5 x Days @ £110/day in Producer hours to administrate local marketing - ie visiting local groups, attending meetings with organisations (West Leeds) = £275			
Total:	£500		

Details of volunteers	2 volunteers
Volunteer role	Keeping watch over valuables while the troupe is performing, assist with audience access needs