



The aim of The Festival Partnership has been to celebrate and promote the diversity of Oldham's communities. It presented opportunities for individuals and groups to discover fresh ideas, participate in and generate new work; furthering their understanding when they meet in creative environments with people from similar or different backgrounds.

**Building Bridges through Culture
in Oldham
2003 - 2010**

2003 - 2004

The first ever Oldham wide, festival to celebrate diversity took place between 23-29 August 2003. Diverse events were held by community and public sector groups in a number of wards. The range of events included, food, fashion, music, health, dance, sport, all of the events were hugely successful and provided people with the opportunity to experience aspects of different cultures they may not have been familiar with. They opened up the various cultural events to new and diverse audiences and attracted people from all communities, including, English, Ukrainian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Afro-Caribbean, Irish, Kurdish and European

The response from the people of Oldham to the idea of Diversity Week was fantastic. All the events were well attended and a lot of people volunteered their time to put in a great deal of effort to help make them a success. The different activities opened people's eye's to aspects of different people's cultures that they might not have had the chance to experience before, and was been an opportunity for a lot of learning and also a lot of fun.

The Asian Music Workshop at Age Concern proved to be one of the most positive, and made a real impact with the older people and staff at the day care centre. Approximately 30 older people enjoyed a performance of traditional Asian music and song, and proceeded to join in, playing the tabla, clapping, singing and dancing.

Over 100 people from the Hathershaw and Fitton Hill areas and beyond turned up to take part in traditional Ceilidh 'barn dancing' and Indian Garba dances. The emphasis really was on taking part as almost all those present gave the different dances try. By the end of the evening people from the different communities were mixing comfortably and helping each other learn the dances.

"me and my friend really fancy the ceilidh and garba dancing, and it will be nice to go up to the Indian Temple, its just up the road from us but we've never been in there before"

Participant

"When you see someone who is different, you only see the difference. But when you spend time together you get to know them as a person"

Participant



Festival of Diversity

Diversity Week

23-29 August 2003

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO ALL

**Music & Dance
Food & Fashion
Sports
and more...**

OFFICIAL LAUNCH
Saturday 23 August

Official launch @ the Rickshaw grand prix "Diversity Week" Promotional stall.
Oldham Town Centre - Opposite the Co-op Bank - 12.45pm.
Contact: Muzahid Khan 07967109393 / Zoe Smith: 0161 620 2992.

Call now for more information | Tel: 0845 165 1985 | <http://www.sonalinetwork.com>
Tel: 0161 620 2992 | E-Mail: admin@sonalinetwork.com

Project partners: 

The second Festival of Diversity took place from the 26th July to the 7th August 2004. This Festival also offered a full and varied programme of 31 events and activities ranging from music evenings, performances in the town centre and local parks, print workshops for visually impaired and seeing people, faith exchanges, food tasting and much more.

The Festival was an excellent example of partnership working and saw a wide range of voluntary, community, statutory and private organisations coming together to deliver the programme. Throughout the two weeks over 50 organisations were actually involved in planning and delivering events, with many more local groups taking part as performers or participants.



Other Events

Once the festival of diversity is over, keep a look out for Bank other exciting activities happening in Oldham.

OLDHAM MELA 15th August, 11am to 7pm Oldham Town Centre

A free outdoor festival celebrating the diverse and heritage of Oldham residents celebrating the diversity of Oldham. There will be a variety of stalls, including food, health, and education, and a variety of activities for all ages. There will be a variety of stalls, including food, health, and education, and a variety of activities for all ages.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH October 2004

2ND OCTOBER, 7 PM FREE EVENT Oldham Libraries will be hosting a Mother's of the Movement event at Oldham. There will be a variety of stalls, including food, health, and education, and a variety of activities for all ages.

14TH OCTOBER, 7.30PM FREE EVENT Oldham Libraries are proud to celebrate "Traditional" music for all ages in the form of a variety of stalls, including food, health, and education, and a variety of activities for all ages.

LANTERN FESTIVAL 24th Oct

A free outdoor festival celebrating the diverse and heritage of Oldham residents celebrating the diversity of Oldham. There will be a variety of stalls, including food, health, and education, and a variety of activities for all ages.

FAMILY FESTIVAL October Half Term at Gallery Oldham

Monday 26th through to Friday 29th October 2004

KALA FESTIVAL 1st November to 6th November 2004

A free outdoor festival celebrating the diverse and heritage of Oldham residents celebrating the diversity of Oldham. There will be a variety of stalls, including food, health, and education, and a variety of activities for all ages.

Festival of Diversity

OLDHAM FESTIVAL OF DIVERSITY
26th July - 7th August 2004

The population of Oldham is made up of people from a whole range of different backgrounds, and we all have diverse identities we can be proud of whether that is along the lines of race, religion, gender, culture, language, ability, age, neighbourhood and more.

The Festival of Diversity promises to be a full fortnight of fun, exciting, challenging, inspirational and informative events, activities and performances, celebrating the many cultures and communities that make up Oldham today. The Festival of Diversity gives Oldhamers the chance to come together in a positive way to share aspects of their own culture and lives, learn about others and build a shared sense of belonging and respect.

For more information about the Festival of Diversity please contact Zoe Smith on 0161 620 2992



2005 - 2006

The Celebrating Oldham programme consisted of three events with related activities throughout the year, The Family Festival in June, the Festival of Diversity across July-August and Lantern Festival in October.

The Celebrating Oldham programme sought to celebrate diversity in Oldham, bringing communities and cultures together, creating the space for understanding, sharing cultural heritage, building confidence and respect through fun, exciting and innovative social, cultural and sporting activities.

Underpinning this is the need to build and sustain good relations between different communities and neighbourhoods, to provide a wide variety of opportunities and activities to bring people from different communities, neighbourhoods and backgrounds together, to promote community cohesion by engaging young people, families, older people, BME communities, White communities and need to reach groups in positive activities and to contribute towards a positive identity for Oldham as a vibrant multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-faith town.

The 2005 Festival took place as part of 'Celebrating Oldham' between 9th July and 6th August with events happening almost every day across the Borough, about 7,000 people attended the 38 events held. New events this year included the first Oldham Pride, in which 700 people took part, and the Diversity @ School day, an awareness raising time for pupils from primary schools in the Borough to learn more about other cultures. New partnerships also emerged: Bluefire, the new project from Kino Film in Manchester, put a showcase of short-films made by Asian and Black directors; Shaw & Royton Area committee supported activities in both areas.

Some organisations did not receive financial support from the Festival of Diversity but did participate and found it beneficial in terms of profile raising, for example the Women's Network and Community Links.

The overwhelming success of The Festival in 2006 was the recognition it received as an opportunity for bringing together smaller events and organisations; communicating, learning, listening and celebrating a diverse modern borough.

The extent and range of partners that took part was a major achievement and consolidated the future sustainability of activity. This year saw groups and individuals working together on the production and delivery of festival activity and events. A strong foundation of people working together was established which went from strength to strength.

The Family Festival activities focused on the Gallery Oldham site. Days have been based on themes such as Crazy Carnival or Crafty Capers, and bring together informative stalls with fun creative activities designed to appeal to all ages. This festival ended in 2006

The Lantern Festival was run mainly by the Council Arts Development team, with support from the Celebrating Oldham programme. Workshops were held with community groups and schools to create lanterns then everyone came together for a parade through Oldham town centre. This festival ended in 2006



Celebrating Oldham



2007 - 2008

2007's Festival of Diversity was one of the regions largest programmes of activity to celebrate the contribution different people and communities make to the Oldham Borough. Sport, dance, music, drama, visual art, poetry, the environment and food mixed and mingled as Oldham's people and places take centre stage.

The Festival opened with a spectacular event in Oldham Town Centre, 'A Place For Everyone', the event had something for all the family with the town centre split into five zones offering a wide range of information from Fairtrade to fitness, and each zone exhibiting just how dynamic the diversity of the Borough really is.

Highlights of the month long festival included East Oldham Walk 'n' Talk, Oldham Sports Development's Dance Splash, Oldham 'Love & Peace' Mela and Sufi Ezam (Voice of Today) poetry. This year the festival has even produced a poetry publication called 'Get Together' with 14 schools from across the borough taking part.

The 2008 Summer Showcase saw 41 diverse and inspiring events that over 25,000 people got involved in. In addition to all of this the Festival of Diversity launched a brand new volunteering initiative, Community Culture Volunteers. An exciting programme for people interested in gaining experience in event organisation, being involved in community art projects or simply be part of a fun team. Over 30 people took part in the Community Culture Volunteer Programme, gaining an array of skills, from building self-confidence to working with a professional photographer

"Thank you for the support and help provided to Independent Living Services to deliver a very inclusive, informative, celebratory and successful event! A very BIG thank you to all the amazing VOLUNTEERS!"

Muswar Hussain: Disability Awareness Day

"I have communicated with different people at all levels, and learnt to work part of a team. I have developed my confidence"

Volunteer

"I have become more aware of the product of the festival and what events such as these can achieve within the community"

Volunteer



2009

2009's summer activity ran from Sunday 12th July to Saturday 8th August. Following the success of participatory arts 'making' workshops in a tent at the Mela 2008, it was decided to offer this opportunity with a connecting theme further a field throughout the Festival. The 'We Made It!' project was to encourage people who came to the Mela to then go along to Saddleworth Folk Festival to continue with their 'making' skills. Eventually, the participants came together, to celebrate what they had made at, 'We Made the Garden Party!' in the Oldham town centre on Saturday 8th August 2009.

The floral / horticultural theme came about from a number of sources; a poem sent in by a member of Oldham Writing Café using flowers as a metaphor for diversity in Britain, the arts social group that meets at the Link Centre for people with disabilities chose flowers as its theme for current work and finally the festival office formed a partnership with the Local Authority Parks and Countryside Service whose remit includes promoting the link between horticulture and regeneration. With this decision in place the Festival of Diversity was able to support the borough wide 'Bloom and Grow' initiative and contribute to the community engagement element of the offer

35 volunteers from a range of ages, abilities and ethnicities were recruited to help support the activities and events during 2009. The volunteers were encouraged to work together on a range of roles and as a result the sense of a Festival team was created. As part of the 'We Made It!' project, five Creative Support Volunteers assisted the 'We Made It!' artists to run workshops at six Festival events. From the first workshop at the Mela to the final event, there was a noticeable progression in the volunteers' confidence and abilities. A team of Event Support volunteers helped with the general running of the events. A large number of these volunteers were adults with learning disabilities as the Festival office worked closely with the link centre to provide opportunities for their service users. The Festival commissioned photography artist Pete Walker to work alongside and support the volunteer Festival photographers, providing the opportunity to build on their skills and expand their portfolios. Volunteering proved to be an invaluable experience for many of these volunteers as they were given the opportunity to get involved and feel part of a team.

WE MADE IT!

'We Made It!' was launched at the Mela which proved to a challenging arena to engage people in a quality arts experience. The project was housed inside a big top, as in 2008, and at times was the only shelter from torrential rain on the day. Lots of families enjoyed doing very simple arts making activities to occupy their children rather than engage in the broader project. The Festival team also managed the first performance of the specially commissioned community choral piece, Ubuntu, on the main stage at the Mela which was a fantastic experience for the community choir members from 4 different Oldham choirs and the community band and prepared them well for the performance at the Coliseum the following week.

"I think these sorts of events are really good for social cohesion and the more kind of events we have like this, the better"

Mela Audience Member

The third festival experience at the Mela was four hours of professional Indian Kite flying and demonstrations from the kites and banners made through the Sky Rise project with the Oldham Housing Investment Partnership. This was a Mela highlight with a constant queue of young (mainly male) people waiting to have a go at flying the Indian Kites and culminated with a young man utilising the 'We Made It!' materials to show younger people how to make an Indian Kite.



COLISEUM COMMUNITY WEEK

The Community Week at the Coliseum was very busy and demonstrated a continuing desire amongst Oldham residents, in their many guises, to “tread the boards”. Activity during the week included a Dance Extravaganza with 500 Oldham school children with a public performance of the best work and a dance, drama, music show called ‘Dancing Down the Decades’ from the All Stars Drama Group, whose participants have learning difficulties. There wasn’t a dry eye in the packed and appreciative house. Age Concern organised a talent show for the over 50s, called Silver Stars, which also played to a full house and we ended a very successful week with a spectacular full cast musical and choral performance of Ubuntu plus extra songs from each of the individual choirs. At Saddleworth Folk Festival, Ubuntu had its final performance in the Civic Hall on the Saturday afternoon and the choirs all enjoyed their trip into Saddleworth.



“Everyone had a great time and went away feeling like they had achieved something. People who came to see the show were overwhelmed and went away with a ‘feel good factor’. They had a good insight into what people with disabilities are capable of achieving and seeing beyond their disabilities”

Joanne Wilson: Dancing Down the Decades



“I think the concept of a festival is fabulous; everyone came together no matter who or what they were”

Ubuntu Audience Member



WE MADE THE GARDEN PARTY!



“It’s so lovely to see everyone come together. These events are what Oldham needs. Oldham feels really united, everyone getting on together, a mish mash”

Audience Member at Garden Party



The idea of the theme for the finale being a town centre garden party flowed naturally from the horticultural theme of ‘We Made It!’ In the weeks building up to the event there was threatening downpours and therefore the site for the event was moved into Hilton Arcade, with great support from Oldham Council’s facilities management and development officer. The event itself was a big success with over 500 people participating and attending and with over 10 ongoing activities throughout the day. There were a number of families who came as a result of their previous involvement with We Made It! The event was infiltrated with Guerrilla Reporters capturing the experience people were having and the spirit of the day. The finale highlight was watching the Mayor and the Youth Mayor of Oldham dancing the waltz in Hilton Arcade with Daisy Flowers - our commissioned host for the day.



“It surpassed my expectations totally, I have never done anything like this before and I was really blown away by how kind and helpful everyone was. It was fab to spend time with like minded people”

Volunteer

2010

In 2010 the Festival of Diversity changed to The Festival Partnership, in order to reflect its changes in delivery and the new focus on a year-long programme of events, projects and participation opportunities. The Festival Partnership continued to engage communities and individuals through project based activities as well as seeking to provide more opportunities for professional artists and performers to engage in The Festival Partnership's year round programme resulting in high quality art projects, workshops and events.

The Volunteer programme developed according to the new direction of the Festival. As the focus of projects became long term with year-round aims and objectives volunteer opportunities also became longer and more in-depth. Three successful volunteers were recruited: A Digital Marketing Assistant was recruited to develop our online presence – particularly during the Of All the People in All the World installation, this role was flexible with most work being completed by the individual at home. A Marketing and PR Assistant was also recruited, joining the Festival team on day per week and contacting key media publication, this role developed to include assistance at a key event. The final volunteer had been heavily involved in the Festival during 2009 and attended most of our events during June-September, providing photographic documentation and assistance. During the *Of All the People in All the World* installation 7 volunteers were recruited and supported during the 3 weeks, performing with members of Stan's Café, and interacting with the visitors.

DIGIVERSITY

In March 2010 a group of older people from Age Concern and a group of younger people from the Youth Council came together to discuss topics around intergenerational issues that they had chosen. The debate was facilitated by Maggie Hurley from Age Concern and topics discussed included; the image of young people in the media, anorexia, family traditions and Oldham Town Hall. The debate was recorded and documented through using digital technologies. Comments were also posted onto social networking sites, specifically created for the debate. Prior to the debate the two groups were invited separately to a digital workshop, where they were able to familiarise themselves with the equipment and online resources in preparation for the debate. The digital content was put online during and after the debate to allow people to comment and continue the discussion.



BLOOM AND GROW

Continuing from We Made it! in 2009 the Festival further supported Oldham's Bloom and Grow entry in the North West in Bloom initiative by creating engaging community projects and working with local organisations towards long term objectives.

Artist Brain Raymond from Leaf Arts was commissioned to lead the project, focusing on the Rochdale Road area. The Bloom and Grow 2010 projects will continue long after the judges have gone home through improving residential relations and generating a sense of community and pride in Oldham.



ROUTE BANNER DESIGN: schools competition to design a Bloom and Grow banner. Working with OMBC's marketing team, the winning banner was displayed on judging route during Bloom and Grow. As part of winner, Jay Florence's prize, Bloom and Grow lead artist Brian Raymond has arranged for an artist to run a workshop in his school

"We've had more than 200 entries for this competition and it really seems to have struck a chord with youngsters. The contest has been fantastic"

Cllr Jackie Stanton

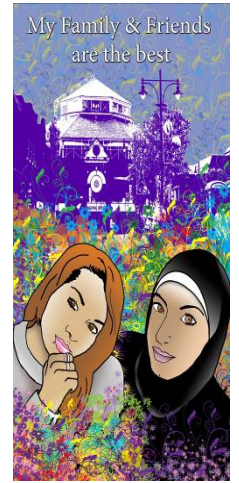


RAPLEYS MURAL: Shaw artist, Pete Walker, worked with various community groups from the Bloom and Grow route to produce a series of 7 giant banners to transform the Rapley's Garage site on Rochdale Road. The images produced by Pete will explore the locality, the suburbs, the residents, the relationships and the mix of cultural heritages that exist along the Bloom & Grow route.



"This (project) has made a difference to some of the Learners who have low self esteem and confidence and who initially were not enthusiastic about joining the group. We are grateful to the Organisations who have funded this project to make it possible"

Linda Edwards: Lead Tutor, Rathbone Centre Oldham



"They have all developed confidence and a new way of communication through art activities"

Claire Ford: Artist



REMEMBER WHEN: Project with residents of Franklin House Care Home as part of the wider Bloom and Grow initiative. Artist Claire Ford worked with residents who have trouble with participation due to high levels of dementia. 'Remembering' project to support positive mental health and quality of life. The aim is to leave behind small but significant improvement to the environment for existing and future residents by creating artwork to define 4 disorientating corridors within the care home.



*"Fantastic, fun afternoon"
"We will really miss you"
"Good fun"*

Participants



"Completely fantastic.....well received by all involved. I was amazed and I would do it all again if given the chance"

Ian Yole – Activities Co-ordinator



WATERHEAD ACADEMY VISUAL ARTS PROJECT

Participatory visual arts project delivered in partnership with the Oldham Mela, Green Monster Arts, Extended Services, Arts Room and East Oldham District Partnership.

6 Breezehill and 6 Counthill pupils were brought together to work with Green Monster and decorate large fibre glass water-drop structures. The workshops were an opportunity to explore the concerns the children held about the new Academy. The pupils were asked to use the art work to detail their experiences, and celebrate the merge.

This art work was displayed at the Mela and will be permanently installed at the Academy when it opens. Public workshops were offered during the Mela, providing information about the project and allowing 200 people to design and take home their own 'mini drop'.



"Beautiful"

@ Mela

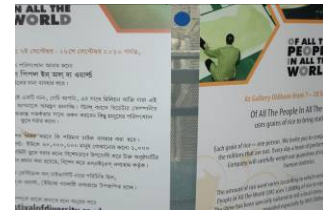


"Keep doing this!"

Workshop Participant



STAN'S CAFÉ: Of All The People In All The World



An installation, designed and delivered by Stan's Café Theatre Company was presented at Gallery Oldham by the Festival Partnership for three weeks in September. Stan's Café uses grains of rice to bring the world of human statistics to life. 1 grain of rice = 1 person and you are invited to compare the grain that is you to the tonne of rice which is everyone else in the UK. Each day a team of performers weighed out rice to represent different population statistics. These statistics became a shifting sculptural landscape and their combinations told shocking, celebratory, witty, thought provoking and deeply moving stories.



Volunteer Performers were recruited to perform with members of Stan's Café, interact with the visitors, gather statistics and weigh out the rice. Volunteers developed in their roles through engaging with workshop participants, maintaining the installation and assisting Stan's Café in developing themes and narratives.

"Thanks very much for letting me be a part of Stan's Café - I really enjoyed it"

Volunteer Performer

“Everyone in the group thoroughly enjoyed the workshop and found it really interesting”

Denise Hutchinson
Rock St Community Group

Working in partnership with Gallery Oldham, the Festival Partnership coordinated 29 workshops with schools and community groups over the 3 weeks, including a day of specifically tailored workshops for the entire Year 7 population of the new Oldham Academy North. Over 500 Oldham primary school children and over 100 community group members visited the installation and took part in workshops and contributed to the statistics used in the show.



“Fantastic - Really innovative piece of performance and installation”

Member of Public



The launch event on Saturday 11 September was attended by over 600 people. As well as viewing the installation, visitors, (including a large number of young families), took part in activities run by OPAG and Spiral Dance and listened to performances from Dobcross Brass Band and hip hop duo Envy. In addition, the Oldham Muslim Centre presented an exhibition about Muslim and Eid and Oldham Rugby League were represented by their team mascot, Rory the Lion.



YOUNG REPORTERS



Young Reporters is an informal group for young people to become a positive voice for Oldham and review events across the borough. Working in partnership with the Coliseum’s Education and Outreach Department the group have been exploring journalism, new writing and incorporating the use of drama/performance. Each participant has the opportunity to build up a portfolio of work and reviews are to be posted on Festival, Coliseum and partner networking sites, getting the 'youth view across'. The group has received some great feedback, including 4 participants from Crompton House School receiving Head teacher’s awards. The group has met with reviewers; the Coliseum’s Press Officer, a journalist from the Oldham Advertiser, interviewed a playwright and has all their hard work on display at the Coliseum during Wordsmith, the new writing festival. The group has been given all of the necessary resources and information, it is now up to them, to use their own initiative, get the inside scoop on what’s going on around Oldham and get their voices heard.

“Thanks for organising these sessions - they’re really encouraging”

Participant

“This is a really exciting project; I can’t wait to see what happens next!”

Carly Henderson:
Outreach

WHAT'S THE HARM IN HARMONY

The Festival of Light is a multi-faith celebration, allowing people from all religions, and those of no religion to experience Christmas, Diwali, Hajj, and Chanukah, celebrating together and encouraging cohesion and communication.

The event was held on 1 December at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Festival Partnership saw this as the perfect platform to launch their final project What's The Harm In Harmony, epitomizing, supporting and enhancing the Festival's core aim of building bridges through culture in Oldham. Working with Birmingham based Ulfah Arts we are coordinating a women's multi faith group encouraging spirituality and the sharing of beliefs and ideas. The group is based on Ulfah Arts' existing group *Musawwir*, *Musawwir* means the Artist/Shaper in Arabic, describing an attribute of God. A central focus of *Musawwir* is finding commonality in all faith on a universal level, using the belief that everyone has an understanding of whom and what God is, or even if there is a God or not. The aim of the group is to empower women to create and lead a space within their communities; essentially exploring a link between creativity and spirituality without labeling it, but still enjoying the commonality and universal aspects between other faiths, religions and practices. The women will be given the chance to express their artistic talents through the discussion and identification of common issues and boundaries, building capacity and confidence.

The Festival Partnership voluntarily took on the technical coordination the event on 1 December and as a part of this Ulfah Arts' existing *Musawwir* group performed, an exploration of poetry and song to unite and celebrate the concept of interfaith. The coordination of an Oldham based *Musawwir* group has been passed on to Arts Development. Once the group is established Ulfah will leave the individuals with all of the text and information available to nurture and develop the group themselves. This is not a group to be led or taught but an opportunity for the women themselves to become leaders, participating as much or as little as they feel comfortable with. The Oldham *Musawwir* and the Birmingham *Musawwir* would have an exchange visit in the New Year to each others gatherings, so they can both learn and develop the *Musawwir* further. We hope that this group will become a lasting legacy to the 7 years of community cohesion facilitated by the Festival Partnership and the Festival of Diversity.

A WORD FROM THE BOARD.....

I am immensely proud of the work of the Festival of Diversity over the last eight years it has been an exemplary community led partnership that has had a huge impact on the lives of numerous people.

The Festival of Diversity was developed as a result of the grass roots activity of a collection of individuals who wanted to contribute to changing the perceptions about Oldham by celebrating the diversity of its communities through cultural activity. Starting as a week of summer events organised through existing community groups such as tenants associations, union groups and individuals interested in building bridges between communities; it developed into a Borough wide initiative which was able provide cultural leadership for and create links between numerous disparate communities and organisations.

In 2004 the Oldham Coliseum Theatre made the decision that it would work with the partnership of community organisations and agencies on a funding bid to the Neighborhood Renewal Fund for a professional co-ordinator and an events budget. This was successful and a Festivals Co-ordinator was employed to inspire, advise, raise more money and assist people towards creating cultural activity and then manage, market and support every project produced by The Festival Partnership..

Over the years the work has gone from strength to strength with some extraordinary arts activity taking place with participants drawn from across the Borough. For many of the people taking part in the projects developed by the Festival of Diversity the arts had not previously been on their radar and it has been wonderful to see people taking immense pride in the work they achieve together.

One of my favourite memories is when I was chatting to Hezera, a participant on a festival led project, and she said "Before I did this I'd never really spoken to a white person before, but now I have and they're my friend, it's been brilliant". It says it all really.

With best wishes

Kevin Shaw

Chief Executive and Artistic Director
Oldham Coliseum Theatre