

Skimstone Arts

Skimstone Arts Annual Report and Accounts

April 2022 - March 2023





Our Mission: To support diverse artists, people and communities at risk of social isolation to create work with, for and about the world that matters to them.

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01

About Skimstone Arts

Skimstone Arts is a welcoming, safe, yet risk taking charity, passionate about promoting equality and visibility.

Our mission is to support diverse artists, people and communities and those at risk of social isolation to create work with, for, and about the world that matters to them.

“See this is... the thing about Skimstone is, we would never normally see stuff like that, you know, in the circles that I go around. Yes, I might a little bit more, but I would never normally interact with a band like that. I would never see the plays or do any extra stuff like the recordings and things like that. I would never see that in my normal life, which is where Skimstone comes in to it; because then you get to see all of this. You get to be part of an exhibition. You get to meet new people. You get to talk to a lot of people.”

Community participant/co-creator,
Evaluation Report 2022

Programme

We produce an annual programme of events, exhibitions, gigs, performances, radio broadcasts and UNITY Festival *with* our diverse artists and communities, exploring the themes of humanity and the environment.

Communities

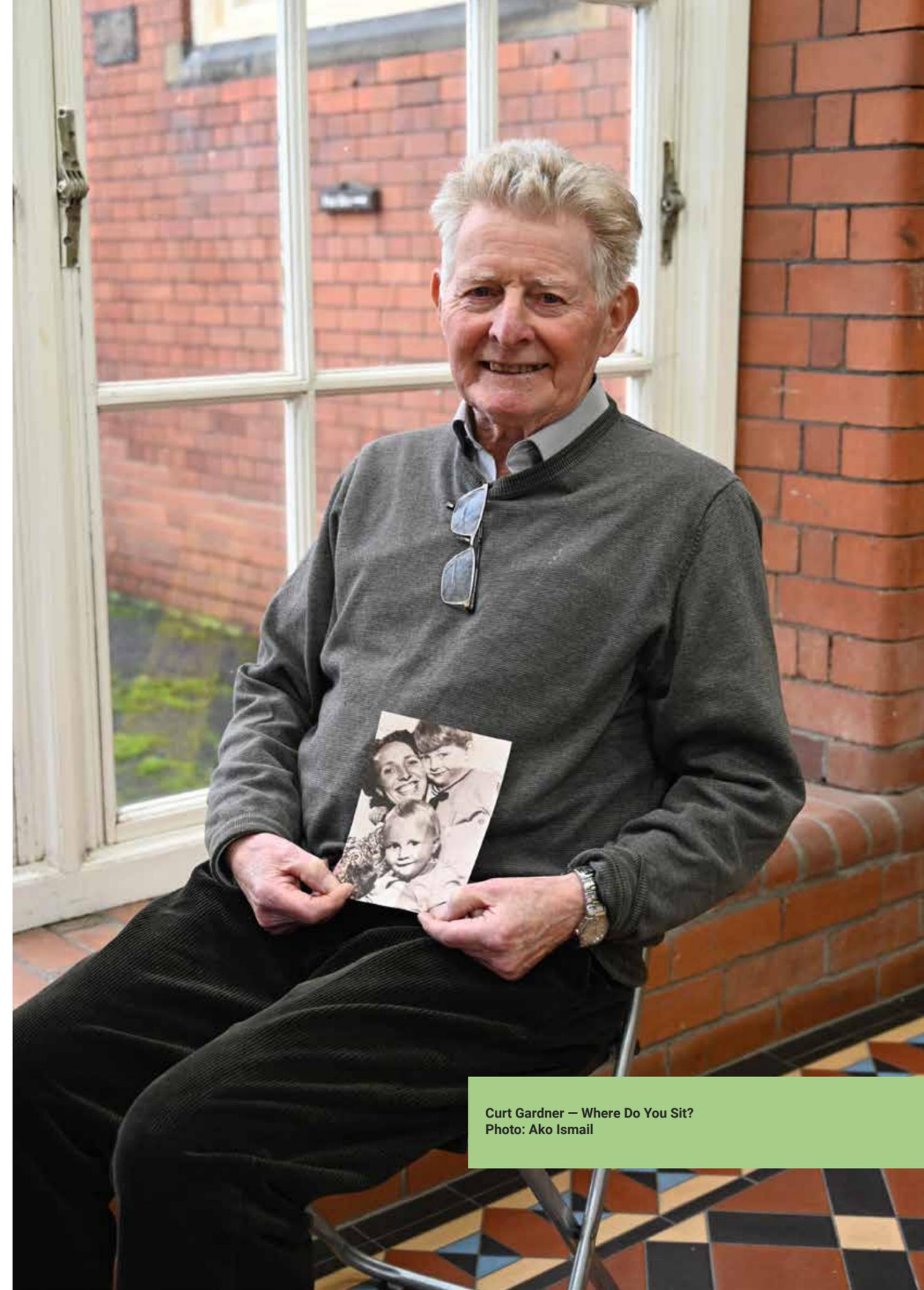
We work *together with* (and call this co-creating) diverse artists, individuals, communities, audiences that society has marginalised or made isolated, and celebrate talent and potential by creating authentic artworks locally, nationally and internationally.

Young People

We support and learn from our Young Artists Collective and their band Reality Boots and co-create songs, film shorts and exhibitions about what they want to say about the world as special commissions for our programmed events.

Partnerships

We work with a range of partners regionally, nationally and internationally to create work that contributes to important research and invites audiences to think about social action, including local community partners, regional universities, national arts organisations and international artists.



Curt Gardner — Where Do You Sit?
Photo: Ako Ismail

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Report From Our Chair of Trustees

In the face of the huge economic and social challenges that have affected all of us in the arts world and more widely, Skimstone Arts has responded with its usual creativity, flexibility and consistency. In spite of funding challenges, important pieces of work have been successfully delivered and participants' lives have been changed by the dedication and skill of Claire, Peter and the whole staff team to whom, as ever, we owe much thanks.

As part of a long term strategy to involve those participants at board level, we took the opportunity presented by several of our existing board members retiring by rotation to welcome new board members with lived experience, and with new skills and talents, ideas and resilience, and an understanding of many of the issues that our participants face in their daily lives.

As Jess, our new Secretary says: "I became a trustee to give back to the charity that did so much for me. I joined Skimstone Arts as a young person, so I've been on the receiving end of all the good they can do. As an alumni I still speak to current members of the Young Artists Collective, and it's important for the young people to see what one of their own could aspire to."

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank the former board members who dedicated so much time and experience to overseeing the organisation, and shaping a strategy that has allowed us as the new board to move seamlessly into our roles.

We're really looking forward to next year and beyond!

Simon James
Chair of Board of Trustees



Simon James
Chair



Jess Johnson
Secretary



Angela Mortimer
Trustee



Tahla Ozleblebici
Observer



Lya Vollerling
Trustee



Carol Candler, former Trustee
continues in advisory capacity

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What We Do and Why

“The event itself was high quality and ran well. It was amazing that it was free for people to attend and so many might have accessed the event who might not of normally done so. I think it did get people thinking about other people, other experiences and how we are all together, not as separate as sometimes we might feel. I like the opportunity it gave to people to express themselves and be heard by others.”

**Diverse young artist living with special abilities,
Evaluation Report 2022**

We produce an annual programme of events, exhibitions, touring performances, radio broadcasts, and attending and hosting festivals like UNITY Festival.

Together with those we work with, we make accessible performances, exhibitions, radio broadcasts and gigs which are inspired by real stories and experiences, concepts, ideas and social action. Our broad themes of humanity and the environment help us explore together what we think, feel or want in and about the world today.

We Have Three Core Areas of Delivery

1. Our annual programme of activities includes:
 - Holocaust Memorial Day
 - UNITY Festival
 - Refugee Week
2. Our Young People’s creative programme
3. Our partnership and research projects

Our Activities and Aims:

Skimstone Arts exists to support diverse artists, people and communities at risk of social isolation to create work with, for and about the world that matters to them. Our general aims include:

- Creating a voice for our diverse artists, communities and all those we work with to: promote inclusion, collaboration, ownership and respect for anyone who has a social and political right to make artwork but may face barriers to do so.



Artists, stewards and production team at UNITY Festival 2023, Preston Park, Stockton-on-Tees

- Making accessible artistic work including performances, exhibitions, radio broadcasts and gigs that reflect current stories and themes that engage diverse audiences.
- Being actively inclusive and supporting, nurturing opportunities, for all those made isolated by society; recognising and celebrating skills and talents, despite the multiple life challenges they may be experiencing.
- Presenting free events throughout the year, giving audiences the chance to enjoy: live music, performance, arts, exhibitions, stories and workshops, that celebrate humanity, the environment and positive social action.

Why Do We Do This?

We believe in equality of opportunity, of being curious and playful about the world, and expressing ideas and thoughts in different art forms that help us to think more deeply about humanity and the environment. We love people and nature and want to travel with the joy and learning of diversity, so that we can begin to change individual and community perceptions, and recognise and support purpose, worth and collaboration *together*.

When we skim a stone we hope it will skip along and travel as far as possible, creating beautiful rings out into the water; and yet when we can no longer see the stone, it’s still there, on the ocean or river bed, placing itself equally among others.

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Who We Work With and How We Work

“I loved seeing such a range of people pass through, the regular applause as art was created at the next table, and the range of people who talked with me through the day resulting in lots of writing I need to do afterwards... In all, the day was as much for learning as giving because it was so much a new experience. Getting through without messing up badly was a relief to take forward into the year ”

Diverse artist and community commissioning member (identifies as queer, autism, mental health, trans, anxiety, chronic illness)
Evaluation Report 2022

Young People

We support young people aged 16-25 in our Young Artists Collective and their band Reality Boots to create work about what they want to say about the world for our programmed events.

The Young Artists Collective (YAC) is a diverse group of young people who work in and beyond the studio to create an individual and collaborative arts practice. Members explore different art forms and develop arts leadership skills with others.

Part of our mission is to go out into the community in order to help amplify voices of those who feel unrepresented in our communities. We use a variety of different art forms, such as songs, photography and video/film to highlight and respond to national themes such as Holocaust Memorial Day, Refugee Week and our own UNITY Festival.

We place great importance on the collaborative process with our young people. Taking inspiration from members and their lived experience, we help enable their voices to be heard by sharing a space. Artists and musicians genuinely support and care to nurture people and their work, using key resources e.g. musical instruments and hardware/software.

Together with the Leadership Team, we plan events to showcase work through live



Peter and Nicole recording at Blank Studios



Verity busking at UNITY Festival



Image: Phillip preparing for filming



Aliya presenting about Reality Boots song



Brooke busking at UNITY Festival



Nicole rehearsing song



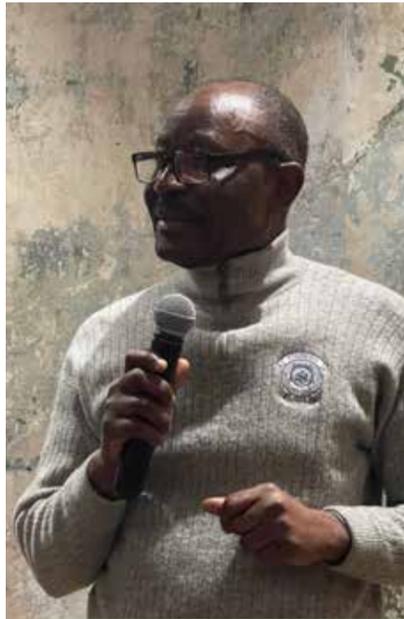
Claire and Yahyah working on a photography project at Winter Gardens, Preston Park. Photo: George



Smajo Beso OBE speaking at *One Day Changes* Exhibition at Newcastle University



Clare Matthews performing at HMD 2023 at Newcastle Library. Photo: Colin Davison



Phillip performing ideas (FODI)



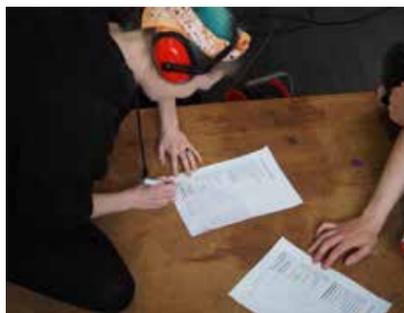
Peter and Loretta songwriting for HMD



Kev and Claire poetry writing for HMD. Photo: Peter Saaremets



Photojournalists Ako Ismail and Shaho Omar with Alix Collingwood-Swinburn and Claire – purchase of *One Day Changes* by Durham University



Nicole and band members creating a new song

performances and curated exhibitions. All members of our YAC also have the opportunity to join our band Reality Boots to create and perform original live music.

Communities

We collaborate with communities to create authentic artworks inspired by their ideas, lived experience and visions of the future, locally, nationally and internationally.

Our local and regional communities (including co-creators, artists, audiences and residents) are often living with multiple challenges that can cause isolation. These include; experiencing poor mental health, poverty, social isolation and anxiety, disabilities and facing challenges when identifying as neurodiverse, LGBTQIA+ and/or with status as asylum-seekers and refugees, and those in later years/older people.

We seek to provide a space, artistic and personal resources for co-creating artists; with a genuine respect for working together, and build strong relationships that nurture talent, skills, positive visibility and social cohesion.

We try where possible to ‘mix’ our communities across the North East (Stockton, Durham, Sunderland and Newcastle), as well as nationally and internationally with partners such as Radio GaMashie (in Ghana) to encourage a wider view of the world, and interesting artistic responses that feature in our annual programme.

We want to celebrate and be proud of the work we make together; and feel that we can safely take risks, push boundaries, listen to all voices, that also impact on social action, performances and curated exhibitions.

Partners

We work with a range of partners regionally, nationally and internationally, to create work that contributes to important research and invites audiences to think about the stories, narratives and themes, embedded in the artistic work and social action.

As an organisation we have over 25 years experience of producing, collaborating, performing, training, engaging and co-creating with diverse artists and communities, in over 300 collaborative artistic projects and commissions, regionally to internationally with over 20,000 people. This activity has been supported through a diverse group of funders, stakeholders and commissioners.

Integral to our organisation’s development and growth is our commitment to partnerships that reflect the inclusive values of our mission statement, representation of voice, and social action.

Our partnerships and collaborations include regional to international services for: refugees and asylum seekers; ageing, health and wellbeing services and providers; academic partners including UK Universities (Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Edinburgh) and international knowledge sharing; music and performance venues and producers, as well as partnerships that enable our diverse young leaders to flourish, and providing pathways for nourishing creative talents.

Our annual programme has continued to develop these positive partnerships. UNITY Festival demonstrates how key cultural venues, community organisations and refugee action groups can co-design and deliver inclusive and accessible events together.

05

Our Year of Impact

“What I found was great for me...? I’m quite conscious of other people when I’m out. I’ve realised it’s not me, it’s the people I’m with... When I was at Skimstone Arts I could sing. I could dance. All of those these things that I would be a bit shy doing. I was thinking it’s really taken me out of my comfort zone, because I wasn’t being judged, and because people just wanted to see you having a good time. It was lovely, so I sang and danced all weekend. I’m a different person going into that festival, coming out of the festival. I really do feel like it’s been brilliant for me.”

**Community participant/co-creator,
Evaluation Report 2022**

We place artists, communities, audiences and governance at the heart of all our projects and annual programme. This helps us to collect stories and experiences from our co-creators, audience and partners who create work with us so that we can understand and learn from what the impact has been and how we can continue to make it even better. We work closely with external evaluators so that feedback and responses can be honest and anonymous alongside direct reactions.

Impact is always a two-way process at Skimstone Arts as we also reflect on the transformation that co-creators and communities have on us, helping us to make artworks about the world that matters and also extend this beyond the artistic sessions into our event, production and programming management.

We also want to learn about how audiences were able to come to our events, how they felt, what worked or didn’t work, and how they may go away thinking about their own involvement in the world.

We hope you enjoy these Impact Case Studies as much as we do. They share and celebrate the difference the travelled journey has been, by collaborating together with our artists and communities.



Festival Attendee at *UNITY Festival 2023*

3497

IN-PERSON
AUDIENCE MEMBERS

16 PROJECTS
DELIVERED

3 CPD

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL CONTINUOUS
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
SESSIONS FOR THE SECTOR

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

49,121

SYMPOSIUMS

3

292

CO-CREATORS

1 FESTIVAL
49 WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS

78 EVENTS
IN PERSON / LIVE / BROADCAST

48

ORIGINAL ARTWORKS
CREATED

31 DIVERSE YOUNG PEOPLE
CORE TO THE PROGRAMME

222

FREELANCE ARTISTS
OPPORTUNITIES

40 VOLUNTEERS

185

SESSIONS

REALITY BOOTS:
1 ALBUM LAUNCH
10 LIVE GIGS
1 REGIONAL TOUR

Impact Case Study: One Day Changes

One Day Changes is an exhibition by Kurdish Iraq photojournalists Ako Ismail and Shahor Omar who now live in the North East of England. The exhibition and film, *The Smell of Apples*, commissioned by Skimstone Arts, premiered as part of Holocaust Memorial Day 2022 at Newcastle City Library in January 2022, and featured a radio broadcast performed to a live audience, and via Skimstone Radio and Facebook Live. The broadcast featured original music, alongside film, poetry and spoken word all inspired by real stories, research and lived experiences, exploring how we can build a better future, one change at a time.

In March, One Day Changes toured to Pop Recs, Sunderland, coinciding with the anniversary of the Halabja chemical attack, and St. John's College, Durham University which included a seminar and panel discussion following the screening. In June the exhibition toured to Newcastle University to coincide with Refugee Week 2022, presented outdoors in a unique setting on campus accompanied by a soundscape by international Kurdish composer Rzgar Hama Rauf, commissioned by Skimstone Arts. The film *The Smell of Apples* was screened and followed by a panel discussion.

Outcomes

- Exhibition and film tour to **4** high profile venues, including regional universities as well as new expressions of interest to host the work nationally.
- Over **600+** people have attended the exhibition and film screenings, live and online.

Impact

- Ako and Shahor are now established Associated Artists embedded in Skimstone Arts practice and support project development, documentation and film production across Skimstone Arts projects.
- We have established regional and national connections with University partners and members of National Union of Journalists.
- Social action has been embedded across this project, inviting audiences to pledge messages of support for Ukraine and all those affected by war and oppression.
- The project has received positive PR coverage regionally, national and across Kurdistan media channels.

Feedback

"Incredibly striking, an important message that all humanity experiences the same in war wherever it may be."

**Audience member, Durham University
May 2022**



ITV filming the purchase of One Day Changes with Ako Ismail and Shahor Omar at Durham University

"The purchase of our photography project by Durham University was one goal that made me happy. I find it very important the project is now available to all students and they can be used for research. Which is a great way for students to learn directly about war and its aftermath from our direct experience as photo journalists."

Working with Skimstone has been a very important career stage experience. Through this I created many doors, job opportunities and connections to spread my work further. What is most gratifying is that the beliefs I worked for were very much in common with Skimstone and working for humanity, coexistence and spreading peace. That made me very happy and they helped me to keep working."

Ako Ismail



Shahor Omar with One Day Changes exhibition

Impact Case Study: Refugee Week 2022

Refugee Week 2022 is a national festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of people living with lived refugee experiences and people seeking sanctuary. The theme for Refugee Week 2022 was 'Healing'. This year we worked with communities with lived refugee experiences in Stockton to create a new performance piece called *Minds of Healing Hearts*. This premiered in the garden space outside the entrance to the Fine Art building at Newcastle University on Friday 24 June, and at ARC Stockton for a special takeover event on Saturday 25 June.

Visitors were also able to explore *One Day Changes*, a photographic exhibition by our Associate Artists and photojournalists Ako Ismail and Shahor Omar which documents refugee camps in Iraq and Syria. The exhibition was on display in Newcastle University's Long Gallery from Friday 24 June to Thursday 30 June.

There was also the opportunity to see our specially created film *The Smell of Apples*, directed by Claire Webster Saaremets, and hear specially commissioned music by international Kurdish composer Rzgar Hama Rauf broadcast within the university arches.

Outcomes

- **3** performances of *Minds of Healing Hearts* by the Sun and the Soul Company at Newcastle University and ARC Stockton.
- **1** exhibition of *One Day Changes* at the Long Gallery, Newcastle University.
- **1** film screen of a specially created film *The Smell of Apples*.
- **1** sound installation by international Kurdish composer Rzgar Hama Rauf broadcast within the university arches.
- **1** radio broadcast (Podcast still available on Mix Cloud).
- **3** presentations and Q&A responding to the themes relating to the event by Skimstone Arts, Newcastle University, Newcastle City Council.
- **350+** live audiences.
- **359** radio audiences.
- **42** co-creators.
- **3** volunteers.
- **5** artists.
- **6** original artworks.

Impact

- Audiences experienced an awareness and understanding of the Holocaust and other genocides and how persecuted people continue to suffer today.
- Exhibition, live event and radio broadcast respected persecuted communities and individuals' experiences through collaborating on story sharing.



The Sun & The Soul Company from ESOL cafe at St. Peter's Church, Yarm performing at Newcastle University for Refugee Week 2022
Photo: Ako Ismail

- Residents of the city empathised and worked with our young people to create original songs about the theme of Ordinary People.
- Co-creators and audiences increased awareness and recognition of the attitudes and behaviours that lead to discrimination, persecution and genocide and contributed to Newcastle's status as a City of Sanctuary, encouraging tolerance and inclusion.
- Audiences pledged a response that is active and demonstrates empathy and understanding.

Feedback

"It felt amazing. It's a really unique experience. And I think it's really important in the building of confidence. And as you say everyone was focused. That's because everyone has a really amazing set of skills that is yet to be explored. And that's why it's amazing to have this company located near Stockton to have that space for everyone."

"For me is to feel confidence. Very confident, like power like before... with people, different people like friendly and I feel give me more power, confidence. I feel like mentally, wow. I did (it)."

The Sun & The Soul Company

"I can tell you what a triumph it has all been – thank you!! I have had so many people come up to me and say how moving the performances were, how they enjoyed the music, the films [and] the One Day Changes exhibition."

David Baines, Senior Lecturer in Media & Cultural Studies at Newcastle University

Impact Case Study: Where Do You Sit?

Where Do You Sit? was presented as part of the National Holocaust Memorial Day Programme and also part of Newcastle City Council's Holocaust Memorial Day Events 2023. Our Where Do You Sit? programme included a free exhibition which was on display at Newcastle City Library from Friday 20 to Wednesday 25 January 2023, a special event which was hosted in Bewick Hall at Newcastle City Library on Wednesday 25 January, and a radio broadcast which shared highlights from the event was broadcast on Skimstone Radio on Friday 27 January.

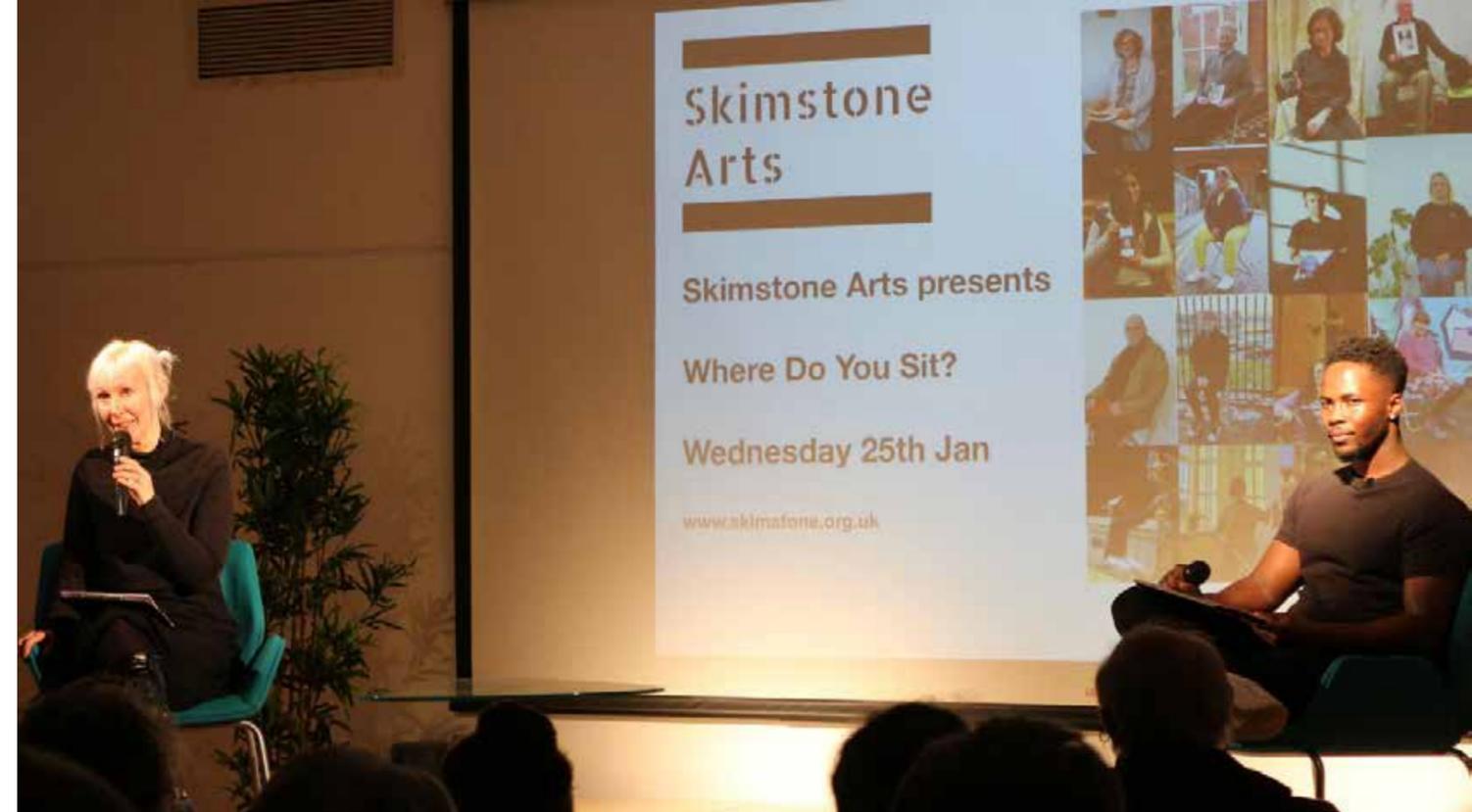
Aims

- To raise awareness and understanding of the Holocaust and other genocides.
- To enable persecuted communities to commemorate those who suffered and died during the Holocaust and other genocides and who continue to suffer today.
- To respect persecuted communities and individuals' experiences through collaborating and story sharing, resulting in an exhibition, live event and radio broadcast.
- To encourage residents of the city to empathise with their loss, and work with our young people to create original songs about the theme of 'Ordinary People'.
- To enhance awareness and recognition of the attitudes and behaviours that lead to discrimination, persecution and genocide, and to encourage appropriate resistance to them

- To contribute to Newcastle's status as a City of Sanctuary and encourage tolerance and inclusion.
- To encourage audiences to pledge a response that is active and demonstrates empathy and understanding.

Outcomes

- **16** individuals from our diverse communities made creative contributions to our *Where Do You Sit?* programme, underpinning our core programming values of representation, inclusivity, quality and equality.
- **3** artists, our Artistic Director and two Associated Artists with lived refugee experience, captured the portraits featured in the exhibition.
- **29** people came to the exhibition opening at Newcastle City Library.
- **41** people attended the sold out event at Newcastle City Library.
- **168** listeners tuned in to listen to the Skimstone Radio broadcast featuring highlights from the *Where Do You Sit?* event.
- **10,121** people were reached with content about *Where Do You Sit?* In January 2023 via social media. This included 2,231 people via Facebook, 607 people via Instagram and 7,283 impressions on X (formerly known as Twitter).
- **161** users visited Skimstone Arts website, of which 70.8% were new visitors, in January 2023.



Claire Webster Saaremets and Kema Kay hosting *Where Do You Sit?* Event for HMD 2023 at Newcastle City Library



Ako Ismail – *Where Do You Sit?*



Irena Mujacic Carlton portrait for *Where Do You Sit?* Exhibition



Skimstone staff, artists and contributors at HMD 2023 at Newcastle City Library

Feedback

"Hugely moving, creative and informative. Human stories which reflected humanity in all its glories/horrors. Ordinary transformed into extraordinary."

Audience Member

"Great exhibition of life journey through difficulties, memories of love ones, touching stories, all need everyone's support with hold common value – kindness, love, freedom demands from situation of injustices. Keep it going!"

Visitor to Exhibition

"Powerful and thought provoking texts that will hopefully persuade others to reach out and work towards 'others' to enrich our lives and our country."

Visitor to Exhibition

"To date the world is still demonstrating divide and hate: I hope something changes through the understanding of unity and shared dreams."

Visitor to Exhibition

"Still trying to process today. So many emotions, sadness at what happened to ordinary people, anger that it is still happening, and joy that even in adversity survivors lived to tell their stories."

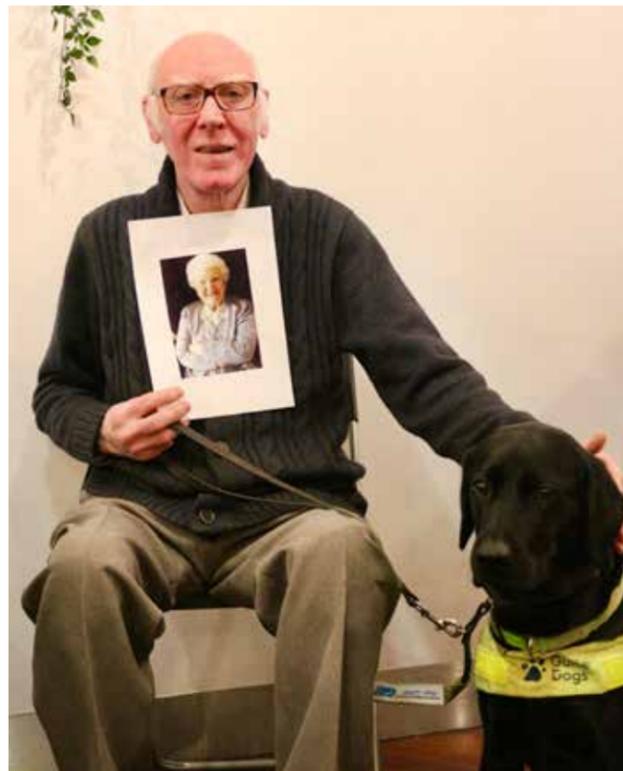
Audience Member

"A very thoughtful presentation which can inspire us and stir us out of our complacency. Really touched by the poems especially the one entitled It will never happen."

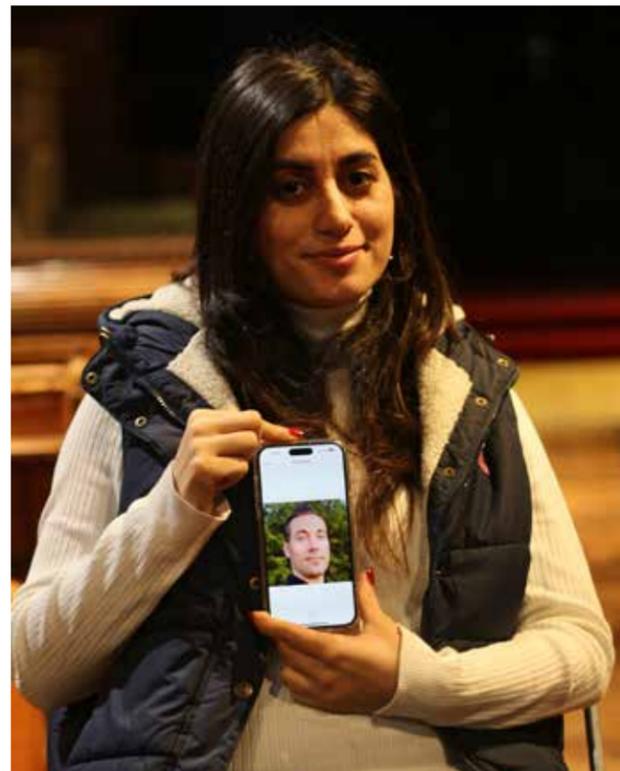
Audience Member



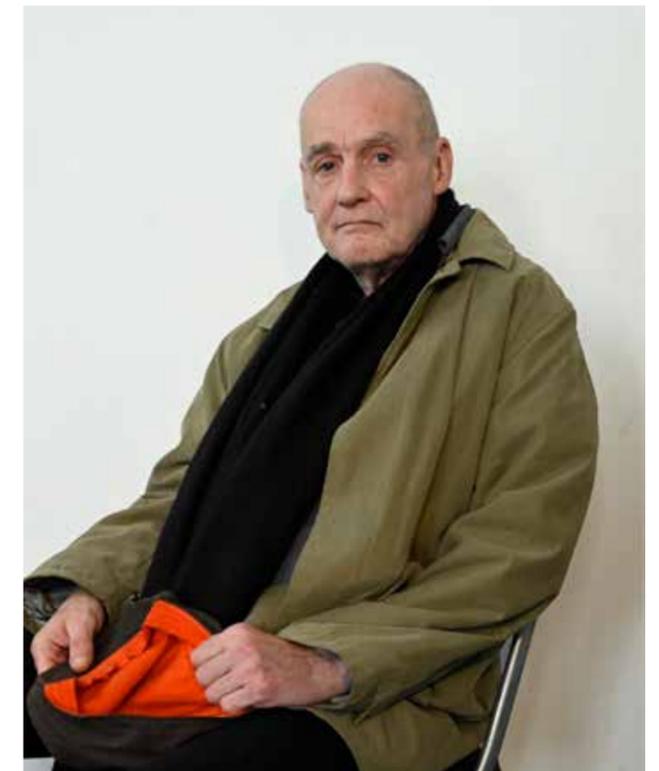
Balsam Ahmed's portrait for *Where Do You Sit?* Exhibition



Les Oliver and portrait for *Where Do You Sit?* Exhibition



Sanya's portrait for *Where Do You Sit?* Exhibition



Kev's portrait for *Where Do You Sit?* Exhibition

Impact Case Study: UNITY Festival

UNITY Festival 2023 took place at Preston Park Museum on 18 and 19 March and at Ouseburn Community Centre on 25 March. This *free* music and arts festival celebrated humanity, nature and social action, including: live music, performance, arts, exhibitions, creative workshops and outdoors trails. Festival-goers of all ages took part in a jam-packed programme of events.

Now in its third year, UNITY Festival 2023 built on the legacy of previous UNITY Festivals to lay a strong foundation for future creative activity in Newcastle upon Tyne. This year's festival consolidated existing relationships with artists, partners and organisations such as Action Asylum, the Natural History Society of Northumbria and Nii Kwarty Owoo, musician and choreographer, rapper and singer song-writer Kema Kay and photographer Kev Howard.

It also nurtured new relationships including those with: Ouseburn Community Centre, Hannabiell and the Midnight Blue Collective, Lawnmowers' Beat This, Circus Central, Ouseburn Trust, the West End Refugee Service, Preston Park Museum, RSPB, Tin Arts, an inclusive dance organisation based in Durham, dance artist and digital animator Jem Clancy and performance artist Yuvel Soria.

Outcomes

- **181** diverse artists were commissioned and delivered **52** events throughout the day underpinning our core programming values of representation, inclusivity, quality and equality.
- **26** live performances, **16** interactive workshops and participatory events, **6** exhibitions and **8** talks took place throughout the day.
- **2062** participants took part in the festival. Of the sample data gathered 45% of visitors lived across Newcastle upon Tyne, 19.4% from Stockton-on-Tees, 16.1% from outside the region (including Glasgow, Bath and Malton in Yorkshire) 9.7% from North Tyneside, 6.4% from Gateshead and 3% from Middlesbrough.
- Content about UNITY Festival reached **36,604** people via social media in March 2023 - 27,861 people via Facebook, 1,472 people via Instagram and achieved 7,271 impressions on X (formerly known as Twitter).
- **410** users visited Skimstone Arts website to find out more about the festival in March 2023 of which 79.4% were new visitors.
- **32** volunteers from across the region worked together with the core team to support the effective event management of the festival.

Impact

- Engaged young people and communities with: lived refugee experience, learning disabilities, poor mental health, social anxiety,



Artist and Tech Manager Nii Kwarty Owoo leads an all age movement workshop at Ouseburn Community Centre

those living with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and individuals from other disadvantaged backgrounds who feel marginalised by society in the creation, commissioning and delivery of UNITY Festival across co-collaborators and audiences.

- Celebrated diversity through the careful yet risk-taking programming of artists and events with, by and for the above target groups.
- Invested in artistic, creative and production skills of target groups and promoted confidence and visibility to new audiences.
- Supported our target groups to access regular workshops, events and production opportunities resulting in a festival featuring content relevant to them.
- Commissioned new work by diverse artists that responded to the themes of humanity, diversity and nature that encouraged positive social action and gave opportunities to perform, exhibit and screen live to a wide range of audiences from across the North East of England.

Feedback

"UNITY Festival 2023 was an opportunity for people from all walks of life to come together to be part of a community, explore the natural world and consider what we can do to make a difference. Created with diversity at its heart this playful, creative free festival was co-designed with community groups we work with across the North East of England."

Claire Webster Saaremets, Artistic Director, Skimstone Arts

"I love how Skimstone Arts group made us do some good dances. It was really body warming and uniting. I am a 29 year old female from Namibia... I am a good dancer and actor. Found out through Action Asylum."

Audience Member



Audience member views Kev Howard's exhibition



Yahyah views his work in exhibition



Yuvel Soria collaborates with Keith Hill Preston Park Museum



Talha Ozleblebici and Tugay Yalcin performing their music

Feedback

"The Music! The songs had important things to say and the music was complex and unified – great musicians!"

Audience Member

"I had to come back today because yesterday was so much fun, We had to dance, to do some drums, doing singing. It was very fun. I meet up with people, many new ideas. My best thing was the exhibition, it opened so many perceptions of me, I was not expecting it to be so ginormous."

Audience Member

"The overall programme being delivered by a diverse range of professionals and performers, who we would not have had the contacts or connections with. It supported our aims in creating a more varied activity programme. The sight was used differently, by different people."

Festival Partner

"Taking part was important on a personal level. It was the first time in three years I'd written anything for display or performance and I'd suffered so much with loss of confidence that I'd cleared out everything I'd written before. Taking part was part of a process of regaining some confidence and a belief again in my creativity. Meeting up with people in the workshops in Byker was excellent and the support from Skimstone gave safety for small risks."

Artist



Circus skills for all



Audience at Preston Park



Nii Kwarty Owoo's movement workshop



Volunteer Lucy Frain supports festival attendee



Artist Fran Thomas's drawing workshop



Activist Ho-Yin Wong introduces Citizen Science Project



Kema Kay performing his set at Preston Park

Impact Case Study: Reality Boots

In 2013 Skimstone Arts' band Reality Boots, made up of a diverse and at risk group of young musicians, was formed. Made up of passionate voices each with unique experiences, the band have composed and released two albums *Louder Than Words* and *Void/Evolve*, and toured their music around the region, visiting schools and colleges to inspire the next generation of young musicians.

In June 2022 Reality Boots toured the North East of England on a six-date tour. Working with other like-minded young musicians and artists across the region, Reality Boots created a number of powerful new songs, each inspired by the world that matters e.g. humanity, peace and our environment, that were showcased as part of the tour. Partners included: Standing Upright (North Tyneside), Jack Drum Arts (County Durham) and Band Jam at Musinc (Middlesbrough) as well as musician, rapper and actor Kema Kay, who each joined Reality Boots to support a gig on their home turf.

Reality Boots new album *Breaking Barriers* was launched at a special event at Cluny2, Newcastle upon Tyne in September 2022.

Outcomes

- This year Reality Boots have supported **31** diverse young people to gain experience of

working with and performing together as a band.

- **8** Associate Artists and musicians have been employed to mentor and nurture the vast talent of band members.
- Young people have learned skills in songwriting, performance, collaborative working, leadership, event management, and music tuition across a range of musical instruments.
- As part of the 2022 tour, Skimstone Arts supported Reality Boots to deliver **10** songwriting workshops with partner music groups, and co-create **4** new songs on themes of social action and environment.

Impact

- Opportunities for paid artistic development and leadership skills.
- Gaining experience and understanding of different roles involved in managing a tour and planning an album launch, marketing, event management and stage management.

Feedback

"My favourite part was being with Reality Boots and working together to write a new song which we debuted on 24 June (2022)...I would like to do more workshops with them in the future because it was pretty fun, and everything was good. Well good."

Musician, Jack Drum Arts



Reality Boots performing at their album launch, Cluny2. Photo: Ako Ismail



Tom records for the album

Audience feedback

"It gave performers (the chance) to express their feelings through music and a chance to do what they enjoy."

"Great to hear some great personal lyrics – fighting stereotypes and hearing a range of people."

"Showing young talent. Giving people opportunities to perform."

"Great performance."

"Lovely music and singing."



Kema and Nicole at album launch



Cerys recording for the album at Blank Studios



Lead Musician Peter Saaremets and Music Leader Keith Hill support Reality Boots

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What We Have Learned

- How exciting it is to see young people, people with different lived experience in leadership and Trustee roles contribute so positively, despite their own challenges e.g. their ideas in project managing for UNITY Festival, co-organising Youth Music sessions, managing our website and social media, and supporting our team with pastoral care.
- The value of building longer term partnerships in the region e.g. the positivity of working with all the staff at Preston Park Museum and Gardens, Stockton on Tees and Action Asylum in Stockton, Friends of the Drop In Sunderland (FODI); in the months leading up to the successful delivery of our UNITY Festival 2023, and Durham and Newcastle Universities, giving us new opportunities for visibility and debate.
- Being resilient, planning well ahead when key staff are faced with and working through life threatening situations, rethinking Board recruitment, taking opportunities that reduce overheads and open up new ways of working.
- Reworking our funding strategy to maintain and be flexible with core staff levels, in an ever more competitive and decreasing funding landscape, to work with those at risk and produce our annual programme; and diversify income alongside increasing capacity for new commissions.
- Ensuring we fundraise for resources i.e. staff time that support critical pastoral care for complex needs e.g. with our young people.
- The importance of integrating audience pledges in our programmes so that our artworks initiate positive action.

What our Audience Tell Us: Pledge Highlights

"To have a more tolerant caring society."

"To always fight discrimination."

"To do lots and lots of marbling, thank you so much."

"To take more time looking at fungi in the park."

"I wish this could be 3 times a year!!!"

"Learn Queen song on the piano with a hat and ask for money to donate to wildlife care."

"It's just so great to receive kindness and help from people, it's not easy to keep being nice to people when they are cold. I'll try my best to not be changed by the world."

"I love how music connects people and crosses barriers and brings so much joy and energy."

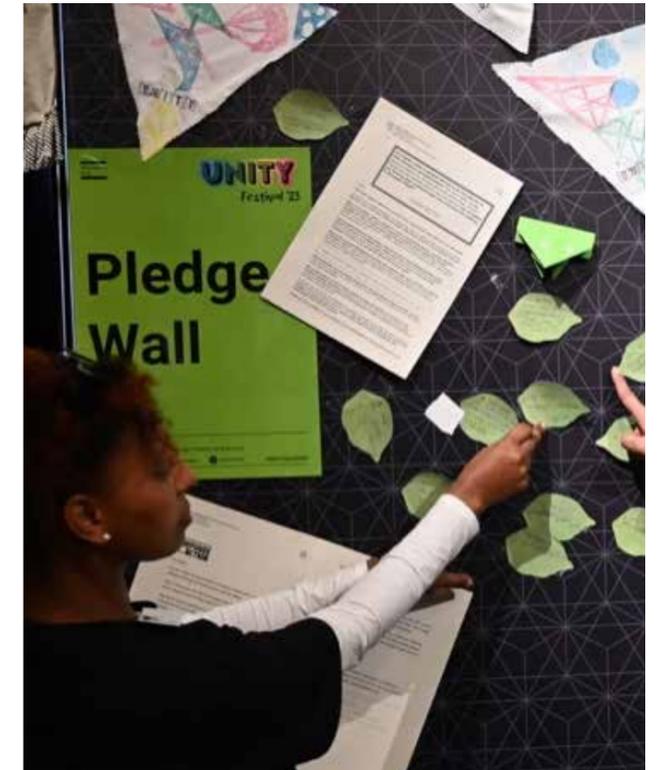
"I would like to act driven by anger, fear but most of all love. "

"Music heals the soul."

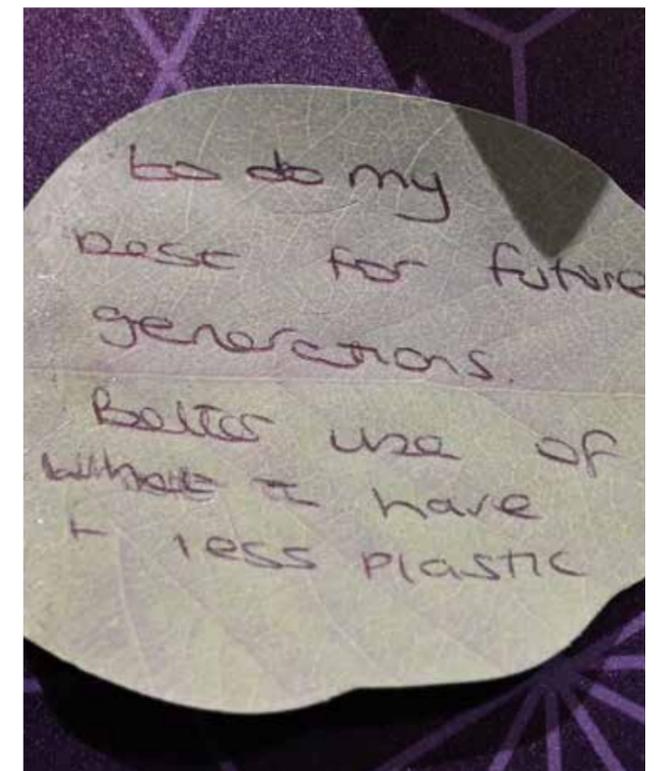
"To share, to be kind, to welcome, to befriend."

"Spend time on my arts (age 7)."

I will seek out other opportunities to connect with new and diverse people.



Volunteer Betty highlights the pledges made at UNITY Festival



One of the pledges from Preston Park

07

Our Year Ahead

This year has been one of vision and celebration, reflection, resilience and new leadership.

I look back at this year and think... Wow!!! We exceeded our vision and planned programme of activity and events, producing some of the best highlights in Skimstone Arts 16-year history. UNITY Festival was such a memorable success, due to months of team and partnership work with an amazing diversity of people. Many times I tried to look beyond the names of the artists, presenters and audiences, and see how many 'should be visible' communities were being represented. How we were integrating and most of all laughing and learning together, about our themes of humanity and our environment. Please do watch the commissioned film by Elvis Katoko on <https://www.skimstone.org.uk>.

Other highlights include the purchase by Durham University of Shaho Omar's and Ako Karim, our Associate Artists', timely *One Day Changes* exhibition and film, featured on ITV and also on Kurdish TV with millions of viewers! National Holocaust Memorial events also brought for us new Bosnian and other war survivor collaborations of different ages, so we

could listen to and respond to their experiences with music, photography and poetry in our live and radio events.

I'm also very proud of our young peoples' band Reality Boots and their regional tour and album launch of songs that matter to them (please see Leadership Report) .

This year we've continued to deepen our partnerships with further commissions by Newcastle University to exhibit work created by lived refugee creatives, and a new 3-year project creating activism songs with St. Anthony's Day Services in Walker. We also achieved another 3 years of Youth Music Funding and NCIF (Newcastle Culture Investment Fund), and a further year of Garfield Weston core funding. We were grateful for a significant grant from Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grants for our UNITY Festival and Reality Boots tour.

We also adapted our trustee recruitment to ensure we replaced Board members who has served their terms, with those who have specific skills and lived experiences of those we work with. We wish to thank the previous board for their commitment to attending meetings, events and checking in with us during Covid/ post Covid; it was very much appreciated.



Claire with Musician Hannabiel and members of The Sun & The Soul Company

We are excited about how our new board are supporting a clear sense of direction for us and opening up new funding streams.

I was also a speaker at *Localism: Re-Evaluating the Future of Culture*, as part of the Events and Tourism For Socially Engaged Arts & Culture Labour symposium at University of West Scotland; sharing and learning different approaches to what we understand as engaged arts practice.

It's also with sadness that two respected colleagues passed away during this time. Dr Cathy Bailey who gave us so many opportunities to learn from and develop our research and creativity work, concerning themes of living with ageing and dementia with Northumbria University and Elders Council. Also, associate artist/musician Hank Hays who worked with us and brought so much colour, humour and extensive musicianship to our projects.

So the year ahead is exciting for us, weaving together our communities creativity and leadership within our annual programme. We will be doing a special focus on national Holocaust Memorial Day events 2024, and planning for an even more inclusive and extensive regional UNITY Festival. Our diverse young people, artists, communities and Trustees will continue to help us to ensure their leadership influences Skimstone Arts activity... and most of all we continue to laugh, worry, support and celebrate life journeys through our songs, photography, radio and research together.

Claire Webster Saaremets
Artistic Director

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Leadership Report

Nicole Davis, Band Leader

We've had a very busy, but such a fun year. We have worked with many different people to create songs that we believe in, and say something about the world, for example *Forest Fading* that speaks so passionately about climate change, and supported each other on these artistic journeys. As band leader and a member of the Leadership Team, my highlight was the last day of the tour at Bishop Auckland, as we all felt emotional about the songs. There was loads of energy with Jack Drum Arts' band Jazzy Dystopia, and all the audience were joining in.

This coming year we're excited about new opportunities to create songs for Holocaust Memorial Day 2024 and the theme of 'Fragility of Freedom'. Members of the Leadership Team are expanding their skills in music production, supporting other new band members, and also older people in Walker to explore creative ways of song writing. Our aspirations are for other band members to be able to solo on their instrument.

I really liked moving studios to NewBridge Project space as it feels much more community based, and we have more opportunities to collaborate with other artists and be inspired by the exhibitions.

Rafael Bagott, Assistant Project Manager

My highlight was definitely UNITY Festival 2023... The feeling of going away to Stockton on Tees and being together with a group of young artists, production staff, and diverse Associate Artists. We created something from the ground up and brought it to a place like Preston Park, and made such a vibrant atmosphere. We showcased talented artists' work and their interactive workshops, our songs from the album, and talks from young activists about the environment and how to protect it.

Also, our Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) live event at Newcastle City Library in January 2023, was a great opportunity to see Associate Artists and contributors express their pain and also bring beauty from that pain, for example Tom Spence's piano piece and Curt Gardner's own experience during WW2, stemming from the love for his mother who is no longer with him. I found this event challenging and it made me think about how as citizens of society, we need to be aware of what causes genocide and what we can try and do to prevent it.

I'm also looking forward to HMD 2024 and to have the opportunity to organise and help



Nicole Davis, Peter Saaremets and Rafael Bagott, members of the Leadership Team

create an environment to share powerful stories, about the theme of 'Fragility of Freedom', and also work with new groups including older people in Walker.

Peter Saaremets

This year has been great to watch members of the Leadership Team grow as they engage in the opportunities and events of our Annual Programme. This includes developing both their artistic and leadership skills and challenges. Examples include: creating a very powerful song, *Memories Lost*, that was a direct response to a real story from academic research; taking on key areas of event management for UNITY Festival including managing stewarding, and the busking schedule.

A special highlight was the success of the tour and album launch. This required a high level of commitment from all our young people to be well rehearsed, attend, and manage areas of the schedules for the regional touring and recording at Blank Studio, Newcastle.

The album *Breaking Barriers* is a testament to the hard work and talent of Reality Boots members and Associate Artists, and is available on streaming platforms including Spotify.

Next year, we are looking forward to further collaborations with other communities and artists for Holocaust Memorial Day 2024, Refugee Week, and of course a new, even bigger and brighter UNITY Festival 2024; and what we can learn and share together about what matters in the world.

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Structure, Governance and Management

Legal and Administrative

Registered office address:
Skimstone Arts, The Newbridge Project,
Clarence Walk, Shieldfield Centre,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1AL

Directors

Carol Candler (Resigned 29/09/2022)
Katherine Dixon (Resigned 11/04/2023)
Sarah Drummond (Resigned 11/04/2023)
Dr Liadi Mudashiru (Resigned 11/04/2023)
Garry Robson (Resigned 28/04/2022)
Wendy Scott (Resigned 11/04/2023)
Rebecca Wilkie (Resigned 11/04/2023)

Simon James (Appointed 03/04/2023)
Jessica Johnson (Appointed 03/04/2023)
Angela Mortimer (Appointed 25/05/2023)
Alida Vollering (Appointed 03/04/2023)
Tahla Ozleblebici (Appointed 20/07/23)

Bankers

Co-operative Bank



Amreen talks about her artwork at *UNITY Festival*

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Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The directors for the purposes of company law have pleasure in presenting their report and the unaudited financial statements of Skimstone Arts (The Company) for the period ended 31st March 2023

Objects

Skimstone Arts is established to advance the arts, particularly but not exclusively, the visual arts, drama, music and film, by the production of plays, exhibitions, concerts, films and performances involving diverse groups of disadvantaged people for the benefit of the public.

Statement of trustee's responsibilities

The directors for the purposes of company law are responsible for preparing the Directors Annual Report and Financial Statements in accordance with applicable law and UK Accounting standards.

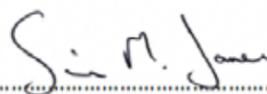
Company Law requires the Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the company for that year preparing the financial statements the directors are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in operation

The Directors are responsible for keeping accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to small companies within part 15 of the companies Act 2006.

On behalf of the board

Director Signature  Name Simon James

Date 6 July 2023

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Independent Examiner's Report

I report on the financial statements of The Company for the period ended 31st March 2023.

Independent Examiners Statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the requirements:
 - i. To keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; and
 - ii. To prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (the FRSE) (effective January 2015);
- (2) To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable to proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed



Date 6 July 2023

Mark Thompson MAAT

42 Lesbury Road

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE6 5LB

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

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Statement of Financial Activities

Statement of Financial Activities – 31st March 2023

Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2022 2023 Total £	2021 2022 Total £
Income				
Donations and Legacies				
2	1,615	525	2,140	2,558
Charitable activities				
3	20,750	153,278	174,028	211,982
Other Trading Activity				
4	3,922	520	4,442	10,812
Total	26,287	154,323	180,610	225,352
Expenditure				
Raising funds				
		0	0	
Charitable activities				
5	28,386	157,269	185,655	206,524
Donated services				
			0	
Total	28,386	157,269	185,655	206,524
Net income/(expenditure) before tax for the reporting period				
	-2,099	-2,946	-5,045	18,828
Transfers between funds				
	30	-30	0	
Net movement in funds				
	-2,069	-2,976	-5,045	18,828
Reconciliation of funds:				
Adjustment to Opening Reserves			0	
Total funds brought forward	28,332	33,571	61,903	43,075
Total funds carried forward	26,262	30,595	56,858	61,903

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Statement of Financial Position

Statement of Financial Position – 31st March 2023

Balance sheet

Note	At 31 March 2023 £	At 31 March 2022 £
Fixed assets		
Tangible assets	6	-
		952
Total fixed assets		952
Current assets		
Debtors	7	21,527
		24,336
Cash at bank and in hand		64,186
		55,250
Total current assets		85,713
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	8	-
		18,635
Net current assets/(liabilities)		56,859
		60,951
Total assets less current liabilities		56,858
		61,903
Funds of the Charity		
Restricted income funds	30,595	33,571
Unrestricted funds	26,262	28,332
Total funds	56,858	61,903

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31/03/2023 THE COMPANY WAS ENTITLED TO EXEMPTION FROM AUDIT UNDER SECTION 477 OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2006 RELATING TO SMALL COMPANIES

THE MEMBERS HAVE NOT REQUIRED THE COMPANY TO OBTAIN AN AUDIT IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 476 OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2006

THE DIRECTORS ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMPLYING WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE ACT WITH RESPECT TO ACCOUNTING RECORDS AND FOR THE PREPARATION OF ACCOUNTS

THESE ACCOUNTS HAVE BEEN PREPARED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS APPLICABLE TO COMPANIES SUBJECT TO THE SMALL COMPANIES REGIME

Approved by the Board for issue on 6 July 2023

Director Name Simon James

Director Signature 

We would like to thank all our funders and partners that have supported us this year.



The NewBridge Project



The NewBridge Project Art Centre. Home of Skimstone Arts.

Skimstone Arts

The NewBridge Project Art Centre
Clarence Walk
Shieldfield Centre
4-8 off Stoddart Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE2 1AL

Online

www.skimstone.org.uk



@SkimstoneArtsEnsemble



@Skimstone_Arts



@skimstonearts

Registered Charity: 1182284

All photo credits Skimstone Arts
unless otherwise specified.

Contact

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Claire Webster Saaremets
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07803670654

Lead Musician/Operations
(Re: Reality Boots band, Young Artist Collective, young people)
Peter Saaremets
peter@skimstone.org.uk
07855674012

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cristina@skimstone.org.uk

Comms Manager
Claire Cockroft
clairecockroft@skimstone.org.uk

Finance Administrator
Julie Maxwell
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Technical Manager
Nii Kwarty Owoo

Assistant Project Managers

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