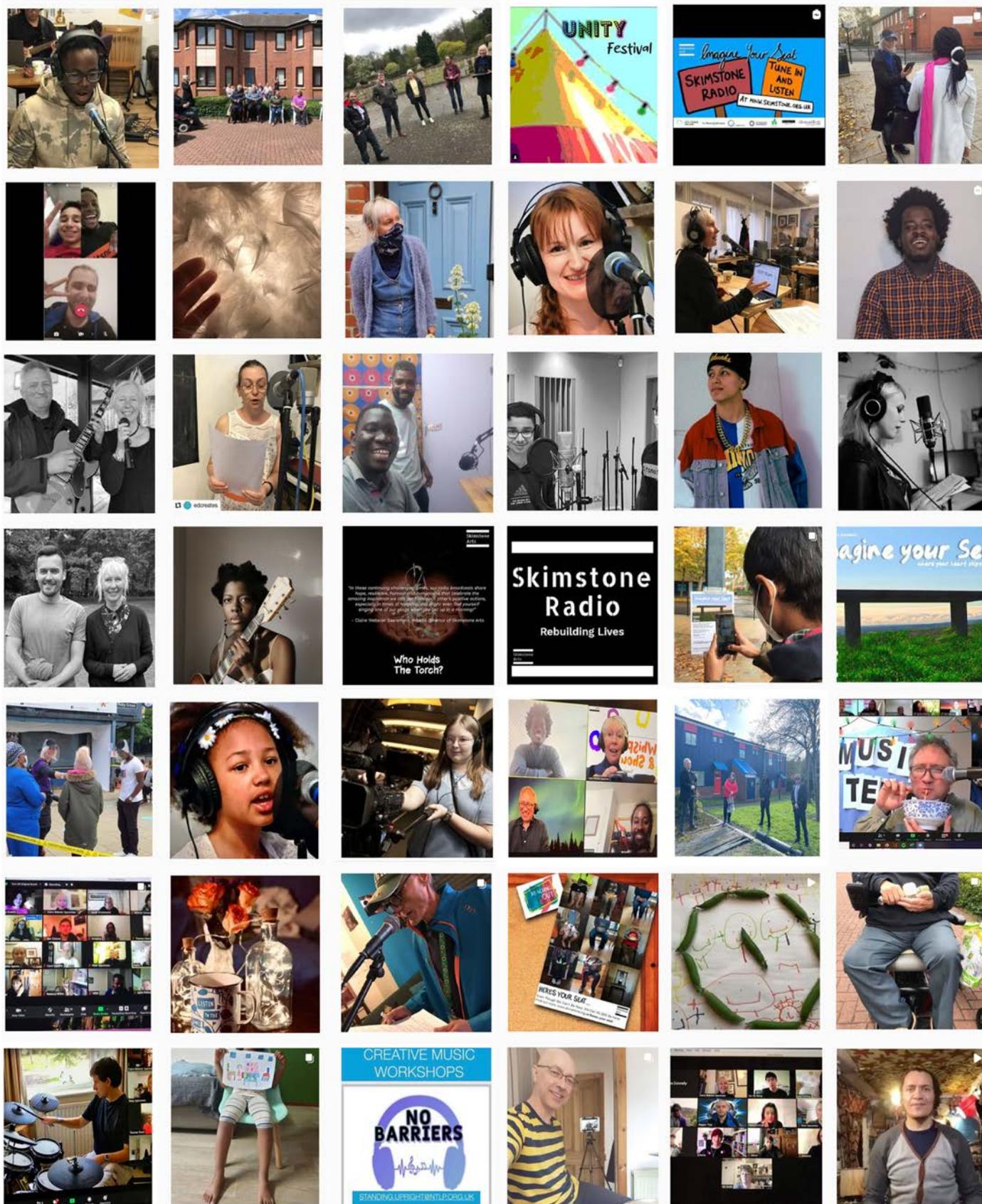


# Skimstone Arts Artistic Impact Report 2020/21

Skimstone  
Arts



---

**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.**

1. Welcome and Chair's Introduction
2. Our Mission and Who we are
3. Young Artist Collective / ECHO Artists and Leadership Team
4. Who we work with
5. Community
6. Our work and the world that matters
7. Our co-creation approach
8. Our programme for 2020 / 21
9. Launch of Skimstone Radio
10. UNITY Festival
11. Knowledge and Exchange
12. The Year Ahead - Artistic Director
13. Financial Summary
14. Board Staff and Co-creators
15. Funders
16. Contact

**Skimstone Arts**

**Registered Charity: 1182284**

---

# 1

## Welcome and Chair's Introduction

**In the context of the Coronavirus pandemic of which 2020/21 will long be associated, the cultural and arts sector experienced dramatic fallout, particularly for the many freelancers and self-employed practitioners. The precariousness of the sector was laid bare. It has been a challenging year for society and for us all on so many levels.**

Through this last year, Skimstone Arts has remained strong, true to its core values and has quite literally been a lifeline for so many people who experience social isolation, now more than ever.

We have continued to create the phenomenal projects in this report which connect people, communities and artists and our organisation has grown. We have successfully attracted significant funding to steer us through recovery and ensure the freelance members of our creative team continue with the vital co-creative work that is Skimstone Arts.

We developed a new 'business as usual' way of working and serving through the pandemic conditions. We drew on our collective resilience and innovation from our management and key staff and artists, and harnessed digital resources and technology to expand our outreach at the most challenging time in living memory. We ensured we continued to explore the changing world that matters to our at-risk communities.

We heartily thank all our funders for their recognition of our value to our beneficiaries, for funders' resources and their belief in our ability to overcome the challenges to deliver.

At a time when it has been hard to be together and celebrate our work in person, we have produced two projects that for me have

encapsulated this year of human-digital adaptation to isolation and creativity, and have orbited Skimstone Arts into two new and exciting territories.

**UNITY Festival** online encompassed the connection we craved and the solace we received from nature and our environment and married them with the arts. In the eye of COP26, the UN Climate Change Conference, and in the context of a climate emergency, UNITY is an accumulation of many strands of work that can be explored and expanded.

The other project is **Skimstone Radio** online which has been the perfect way of bringing our work into homes and community spaces to reach people who would enjoy, benefit and be inspired to start their artistic journey. This gives us a platform that raises awareness of our work and grows new listeners and audiences in the North East, the UK and internationally.

What we hear loud and clear from people is the enormous value and impact our work has. We know there is substantial evidence to support this in the lived experiences and testimonies we have included in this year's report.

Our work — the Arts — drives creativity and expression to support wellbeing and skills progression. But it is the making of quality

artwork itself that we nurture. Through a co-created model, we are supporting the artists and creative practitioners of the future.

We provide the conditions for this to happen, we have the privilege of experiencing their development and growth and then we support them to take off and create their own projects and opportunities. The work they go on to produce is the legacy of Skimstone Arts.

**Wendy Scott**  
**Chair, Skimstone Arts**

# 2

## Our mission and who we are

**Skimstone Arts 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.**

We are one of the North East's leading companies for inclusive artist-led, music-driven arts practice and social action. We create high-quality work with diverse artists, young people, researchers and communities inspired by real stories and lived experiences, which reflect current social narratives, challenges and inspirations that we face in today's diverse society. Led by our Artistic Director and Lead Artist, we continue to develop our co-creation approach to ensure equality and equity and shared ownership of process and artworks.

Our diverse, professional Associate Artists have a strong practice in music, performance, sound, spoken word, photography and animation. In pandemic conditions, they continued to be part of connected community that did everything possible to work with those at risk of social isolation.

In the year 2020/21 we have worked much more in

the digital space but also committed to in-person delivery whenever possible and safe.

We have stepped-up to the crises facing our beneficiaries and the artistic community and have adapted the way we work and learnt together, to be effective and sustainable.

Our multi-generational work is with audiences, participants and beneficiaries who are varied in their needs, lives, and isolation - experiencing struggling mental health, poverty, social isolation and anxiety, disabilities, living with Autism, and facing challenges when identifying as LGBTQAI+ and/or with status as refugees and asylum-seekers.

Pandemic living worsened the situations of people already at risk of isolation, confining them to homes or to bedrooms.

In response to the mandatory stops to in-person core work, we used more phone calls,

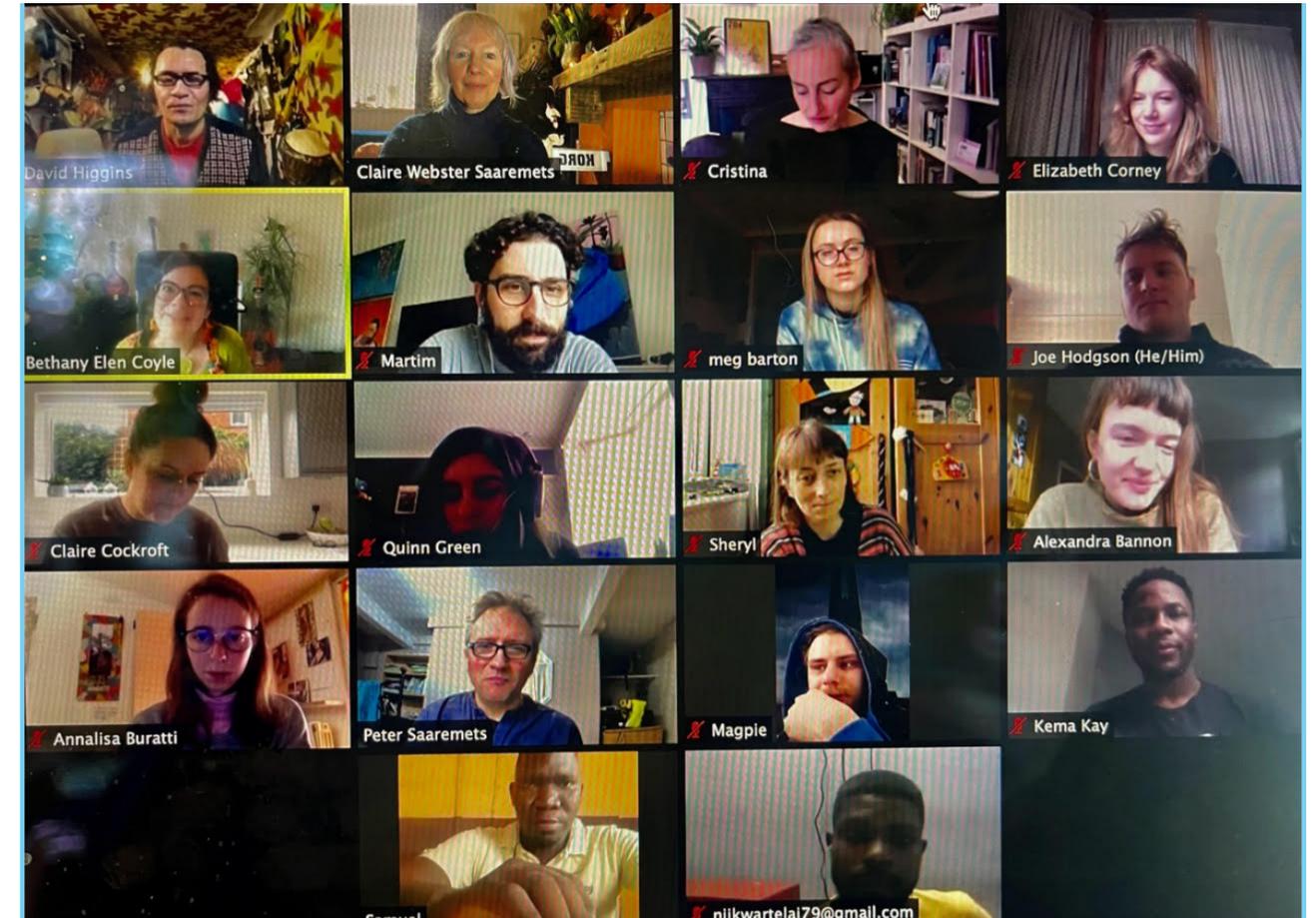


Image: Skimstone Arts staff and artist project meeting via Zoom

safely distributed project packs, and moved to digitally-connective apps and software; we issued devices for those without other means to connect. Together we adapted to the changing and socially-distancing environment.

Digital technology has indeed played a big part, and so has the resilience of the people who are Skimstone Arts and who recognised the critical role we fulfil to support, join together, and enable self-expression with people at risk of even further isolation.

The recognition of our funders allowed us to adapt delivery of projects where necessary, and to invest in the IT equipment that we and our existing and new communities needed to stay connected.

We have innovated digitally with online radio, with animation, and with video conferencing to platform music, visual arts, performance, and innovative engagement programmes.

The year has presented some of the most challenging and unprecedented times, yet for Skimstone Arts it has been one of our most productive. The pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement are not diversions, they are part of our development and growth.

**5** Young people achieved  
**Arts Awards**

**5677**

**Online Listeners**  
tuning into Skimstone Radio

**10 E-Newsletters**

**10% Increase in Audiences**

**2 National Webinars  
of Doorbells**

**8** Reaching Out  
**Assistant**  
Project Managers

**1 Internet Radio Station Launched**

**50** Here's Your Seat  
packs distributed

**7 Podcasts  
Streamed**

**New animations  
created by young people** **10**

**465**

**Beneficeries**

**Artists  
Engaged** **42**

**164 Creative sessions delivered**

**50** UNITY Festival  
packs distributed

**55** ORIGINAL ARTWORKS  
**Created**

**1000**

**Online Attendees  
UNITY Festival**

**Events  
& Festivals** **5**

**4 Trailers & Films Created**

**3** PARTNERSHIPS WITH  
**Universities**

**1 Digital Songbook Launched**

**3** **Creative  
Mentorships**

# 3

## Young Artist Collective / ECHO Artists and Leadership Team

*“Thank you to you for continuing Skimstone through such difficult times! Without Skimstone I think 2020 in isolation would have been a lot harder. And I think it’s helped make this year not feel so long or that its dragged!”*  
- Echo Artist

We share our studio and provide a platform to support and nurture the creative practices of our **Young Artist Collective** and **Echo Artists**, who are a diverse group of young people and emerging artists.

We work nationally and internationally with our diverse **Associate Artists** and commission new work through our programme of events and festivals, inviting leading practitioners and developing meaningful opportunities for our **intergenerational communities** to engage in new co-creating ways of working.

Our programmes support leadership and creative development through tuition and the support opportunities to gain national **Arts Award** and a three-year programme of **Reaching Out**, supporting young leaders to work collaboratively with communities across Newcastle upon Tyne and beyond.

At the beginning of the year, we moved immediately to online platforms to ensure we continued to deliver weekly sessions to design, plan, manage and co-create work together with our **Young Artist Collective** and more experienced **ECHO Artists**. The **ECHO Artists’ Leadership Team** implemented a buddy system to support those most at risk of isolation; they programmed artistic provision which gave vital peer support during the ongoing pandemic.

*“Being part of Skimstone Arts has really helped improve my mental health, wellbeing and self-esteem by being involved in The Arts and collaborating and working with other artists to create music, arts, creative writing and visual*



Image: Ben Chilcott (Young Artist Collective) demonstrating a sound piece he’s working on via Zoom

*arts. Meeting with other young artists and getting to know them has helped make me feel less isolated and I feel comfortable within the group. We support each other through difficult times and the leaders are fabulous. Even during lockdown we’ve continued to meet on Zoom for Skimstone sessions and been able to stay creative supporting each other through uncertain times.”*

- Skimstone artist, Young Artist Collective

**Reality Boots**, whilst unable to meet in person to collaborate and rehearse together, embraced digital and online platforms to collaborate in and beyond sessions via Zoom and WhatsApp to create pieces for our major events, **Here’s Your Seat, Imagine Your Seat, Who Holds the Torch?** They shared their work at **UNITY Festival** supporting headline acts over the festival weekend.

*“Skimstone Arts has been a god send to my son. He joined Skimstone Arts 2 weeks before lockdown and had been bedroom bound with epilepsy and total loss of confidence.*

*During the past few weeks Skimstone Arts have regularly worked with him to create his own song with a professional musician, play his keyboard and have his song online and played at an event. I can't tell you what this has meant to us as a family.”*  
- Parent of a Young Artist Collective member

Throughout the year the **Leadership Team** undertook a series of creative mentorships that explored skills development and pathways into design and marketing, project management and evaluation methodology, risk assessment and health and safety - which supported the management team across the organisation.

We were thrilled to receive recognition for our work with young people through another award from the High Sheriff of Tyne and Wear.

March 2021 marked the end of three years of investment into **Reaching Out** projects which placed young people at the heart of creative leadership – building cultural capacity within the city.

During this period we created **eight freelance roles** for young people as Assistant Project Managers and Project Coordinator responsible for creative development, management and delivery, alongside our volunteer team of young people.

Throughout this time we have seen the promotion of two young people into project coordinator and assistant project manager roles, in which they support the senior management team across project development, delivery, evaluation and reporting.

We worked in partnership with the universities of Northumbria and Newcastle to offer placements to students, one of whom has joined us as an Assistant Project Manager.

In December 2020, longstanding **ECHO Artist** Ho-Yin moved on from Skimstone Arts to pursue his passion for photography and illustration with the confidence and ability from skills learnt throughout his time with the organisation.

*“There has been many things that I been involved in during my work as an assistant project manager, I am very grateful for this opportunity having only been at Skimstone for little under a year before this opportunity came about... I found these experience to be very rewarding, not only because of developing organisation and team working skills, but having the people involved alongside this journey... I definitely have a lot to take away from my time at Skimstone.”*

- Ho-Yin, ECHO Artist and Assistant Project Manager



Image: Ho-Yin (Echo Artist) giving a video diary reflecting on his time with Skimstone Arts

# 4

## Who we work with

We are proud to work with a diverse and exceptionally creative group of professional associate artists from across the region, the UK and internationally. Through our collaborations we have created original artworks through music, song, animations, audio work and films responding to commissions, or themed work in response to national and global issues and events.

Despite living with the Coronavirus pandemic, we have innovated and stretched our capacity and capabilities to fulfil our commitment to share a clear, high quality arts practice in a well managed and welcoming studio-based approach - adapted for digital and open-air delivery.

We continued to hold high aspirations and expectations and worked with compassion through the uncertainty and social isolation endured by all of our co-creators, volunteers, staff, associates, and stakeholders. This year has been exceptional, and we've been privileged to have worked with 42 artists to create 55 original artworks working with a wide range of co-collaborators across a range of media and disciplines.

With music at the core, we've supported artists to find new ways to share often-untold stories, bringing to life dialogue around important societal challenges and providing platforms for voices to be heard. We have continued to support our young and professional artists, and regional community members, to develop their artistic practice and be recognised for their talent and ability to engage with wide-ranging communities and audiences.

Our **Ensemble** have continued to collaborate and come together virtually, and socially-distanced when restrictions allowed, to create new works in response to *Who Holds the Torch?* Members of the Ensemble took part in practice sharing events and workshops as part of **UNITY Festival** which also provided opportunities to perform prior to each nights headline act.



Claire Webster Saaremets  
Artistic Director



Pete Saaremets  
Associate Artist



Kema Sikazwe  
Associate Artist



Samuel Lamptey  
Associate Artist



Nii Kwartelai  
Associate Artist



David Stickman Higgins  
Associate Artist



Martim Dinis  
Associate Artist



Sheryl Jenkins  
Associate Artist



Liz Corney  
Associate Artist



Bethany Elen Coyle  
Associate Artist



Simon Tarrant  
Associate Artist



Keth Hill  
Associate Artist



Image: Liz Corney (Ensemble Artist) working with Thomas (YAC) on his Bronze Arts Award

*“Working with Skimstone Arts has been fun and diverse. The chance to talk and be listened to – that out of conversations blossoms creative work. With the songs, it feels like a natural process, it doesn’t feel forced. I feel proud of the work we’ve done together! It feels amazing to have written the songs.”*

- Community resident, Byker

*“I loved the way everything turned out. I was shocked that we could still create something great remotely.”*

- YAC / Echo artist “

*“It’s exciting to collaborate digitally. There’s new ways of creating a collaborative and trusting environment.”*

- YAC / Echo artist

# 5

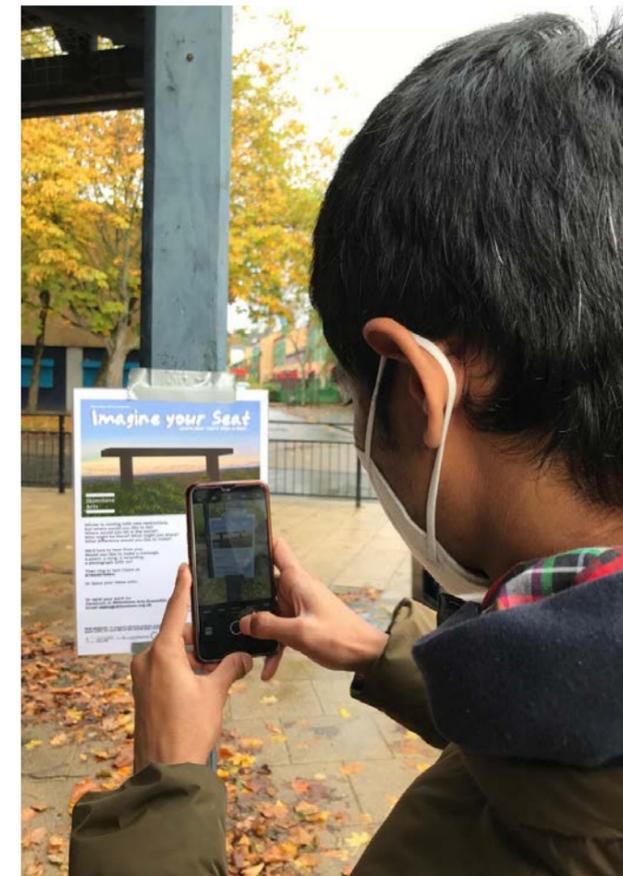
## Community

**Skimstone Arts' practice is deeply rooted in diverse communities. We are actively inclusive and open up opportunities for all less-represented groups including LGBTQAI+, people of colour, refugees, those from many cultures of all ages and people who face challenges such as mental health, poverty and illness.**

Building on strong relationships we have with our young people, Byker and other communities across the region and internationally, we have demonstrated innovation, resilience, creativity, positivity, creating work together (co-creation) with our participants in different parts of the world, by doing what we believe in – the arts as a unique way of seeing, exploring and processing our worlds and sharing provocations and activism to new and existing audiences.

Whilst this year threw up many challenges for all, it also provided and strengthened our positive connections with our communities. **Here's You Seat** enabled us to immediately shift our creative focus to working 'differently connected' with our Byker and Walker communities, especially those at high risk of mental health and social isolation by being bedroom/home bound including our Young Artist Collective, ECHO artists and BAME or non-UK residents and communities.

The project also enabled us to work internationally and collaborate with partners Madame Teatro (Portugal) engaging communities through a universal and accessible creative approach. Working across online platforms during lockdown we collaborated together to create work that was presented online and at a socially distanced event at St Michael's café in Byker.



*“We are absolutely delighted with everything that Skimstone Arts does. You click with a whole range of people in Byker – so quickly you land and be such loving people and build relationships with people. It was brilliant what you did with the Here’s your Seat event in Byker in June and see so many people involved.”*

**- Dave Johnson, Senior Youth Leader, MINE (Mission Initiative North East) Byker**

We also distributed 50 food parcels to our own community participants and to local foodbank Byker Pantry and MINE (Mission Initiative North East). We continued to deliver food parcels throughout lock down via Building Futures North East.

**Imagine Your Seat** further challenged creative exchanges across our communities through an intergenerational and international project connecting people of all ages and many cultures to re-imagine their world and the positive changes they could bring.

Adapting to the ever-changing and socially-distancing environment,, we launched **Skimstone Radio**, reaching new audiences and listeners working in partnership with Radio GaMashie (Accra, Ghana) and associate artist/radio manager Nii Kwarty Owoo (East Yorkshire). The online broadcasts were recorded and shared as podcasts.

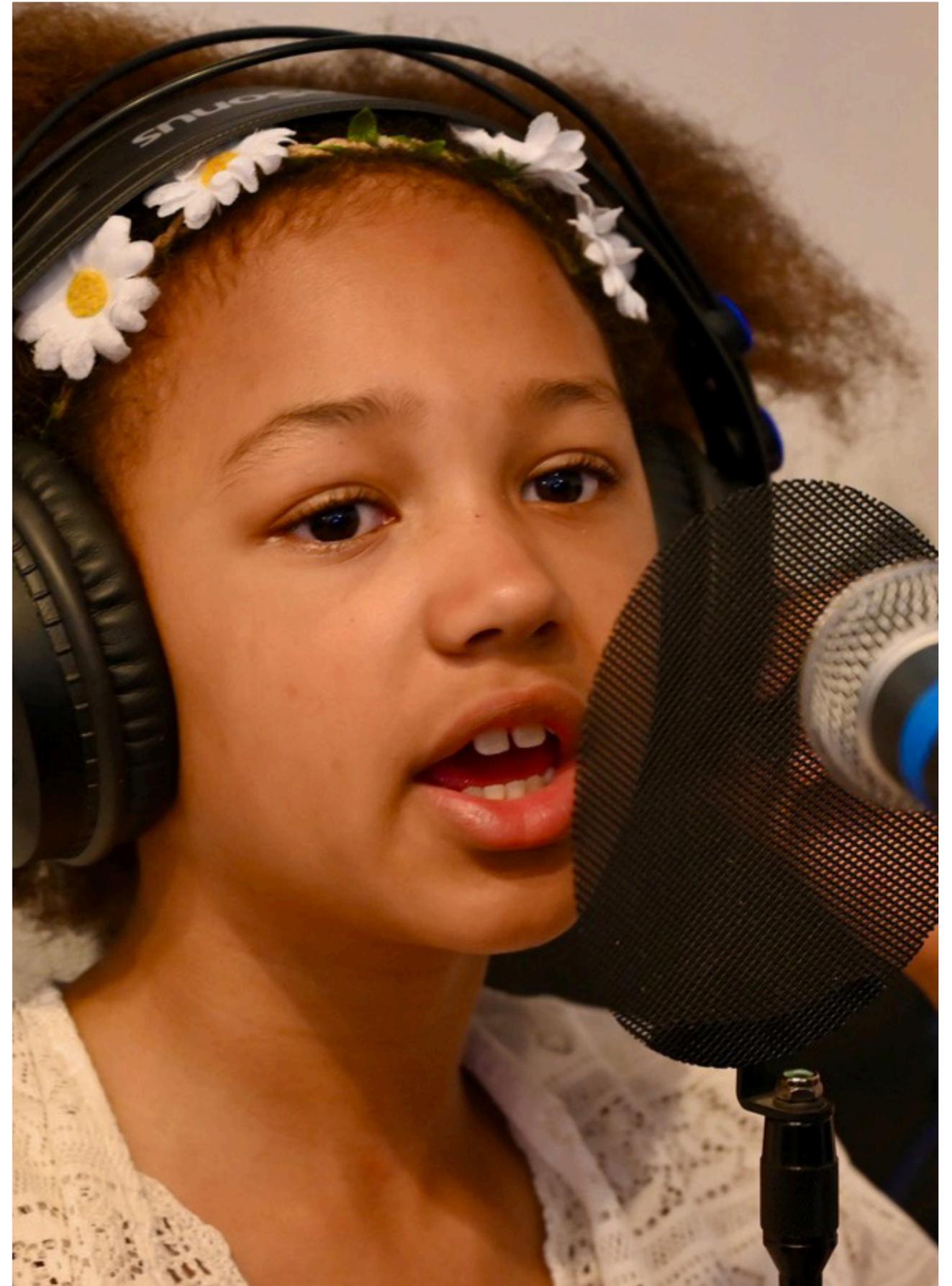




Image: Claire & Pete busking outside St. Anthony's Care Home, Walker

## Singing with People Ageing and Alone

The Artistic Director and Lead Artist visited St. Anthony's care home in Walker, performing songs that created a sing along so that residents could join in at their windows.

In the courtyard we busked outside St Anthony's Care provision services to sing well known songs and say hello through the windows, to those most isolated or who were unable to receive any visitors due to lockdown.

***"Just wanted to say a very big thank you to you and Pete [...] It was absolutely brilliant on Monday..."***

***There has also been such good feedback so looking forward to Monday. [...] How lucky we were that you applied for the residency here!!! See you next week and thank you both again, this was a lifeline to them as they couldn't see their families."***

**Helen Woods-Waters  
Chief Executive Officer St Anthony's Care, Walker**



In June, together alongside colleagues across the North East cultural sector, we took a stand to denounce racism in all its forms. Throughout the year members of Skimstone Arts staff and board attended workshops hosted by Culture Against Racism to develop the organisation's anti-racist pledge.

## Counterpoints Arts, London national webinars

In or partnership with Counterpoints Arts we collaborated in the Refugee Week Slow Conference workshops in March 2021. In February, our Artistic Director Claire Webster Saaremets, and Smajo Beso, one of our Bosnian community lecturers, were invited to host at Counterpoints Arts' (Beyond) Storytelling session.

***"A huge thank you for making it such and engaging and insightful discussion yesterday. As you could see, attendees were really engaged and I sensed that your words will leave a lasting impression for many, and have an impact in the way that they work. I've thought I'd share some of the comments from the chat below - there were many more!" - Coodinator, Counterpoints Arts***

***"Thank you so much for this super engaging discussion and for sharing such powerful ideas. A lot of learning for***

***me and I hope for many others. And a lot of hope for doing better work with and by / about people who experienced asylum, refuge, war - and those who do research or re-interpret these stories through art."***

***"So insightful to hear of real experiences from those who have shared their journeys. I will take a lot away from this meeting, especially about the CONTROL that the sharer should have and the need to REFLECT."***

# 6

## Our work and the world that matters

Skimstone Arts supports everyone we work with, especially those living with multiple life challenges, to be playful, take risks, to actively choose and pick up skills, ideas and concepts. We positively work with people to make something – a mark, a performance, an artwork, a song – and see its skims and steps of momentum. We don't know how far the impact of the experience will travel, but the ripples continue and the stone remains unseen on the sea bed, like the change in confidence and public recognition and celebration of who we are.

We plan our projects to reflect national, current and emerging themes, stories and experiences that matter to those taking part - for example Holocaust Memorial Day Events through listening and creating with Smajo Beso and the Bosnian Community's experiences of war, tragedy and yet future hope.

Smajo shared a compelling story about his Auntie Emina which has been transformed, in her memory, into a powerful and moving song by our ECHO artist Quinn as part of the Who Holds the Torch? Holocaust Memorial Day radio broadcasts.

Smajo said *"She was an amazing person and this is an amazing way to celebrate her life. Thank you and to Quinn for doing this [...] thank you for giving me the honour of working with you and your young people to be able to do this [...] and once again for everything that you do Claire and giving me an opportunity to speak about my auntie on the anniversary of her death. It was 27 years this Sunday gone"*



Image: Smajo Beso & Claire Webster Saaremetts

**Skimstone Arts flies the flag for artistic activism [...] to be inquisitive, to challenge norms, accept differences, interrogate equality, discover new ways of seeing [...] to forge individual and collective meaning and in doing so connect to others.**  
- Skimstone Arts' Chair 2020

Alongside our co-creation work, Skimstone Arts' professional Ensemble support a rich year round programme and we make accessible touring theatre and film, including **Doorbells: Dreaming for the Future**. **Doorbells** is a music-based performance exploring how we consider where we need to live, poor housing and isolation, based on research and collected stories. We also make site-specific performances, exhibitions and gigs that reflect current stories and themes relating to today's cultural landscape, changes in heritage and identity when it is safe to do so.

From April 2020 to March 2021 we produced five events – **Here's Your Seat, Imagine Your Seat, Who Holds the Torch?, UNITY Festival**, and **Whispers & Shouts**.

We delivered 164 sessions with people which created 55 original artworks.

Our overall reach approached nearly 7,000 people, including close-contact with 175 at significant risk of isolation.

The year 2020/21 was also a year when more than ever before we played a part in bringing Newcastle to the world and the world to Newcastle.

# 7

## Our co-creation approach

We train and build relationships between established artists from around the world who work with our regionally-based emerging artists and with people in our North East communities who are at risk of social isolation. Their work is published to audiences in performances, events, exhibitions, films, animations, digital radio, podcasts, and online.

Co-creation takes place with people who have multiple life challenges – such as living with disabilities, poor mental health, poverty, homelessness, encountering racism and racial injustice, people who are displaced, who are refugees or asylum seekers, people with social anxiety – in their daily lives in our North East communities.

Making artistic work together is a life-changing act of bravery which we help people navigate - Skimstone Arts provides pastoral care, and signposts and refers when needed.

We consider the co-creation of artistic work co-creates resilience for people with multiple life challenges – having the means or energy to participate, to join in – and to become part of an artistic community which they co-shape, and in which they experience equality of respect.

*“Skimstone is like a second home for us, especially for*

*refugees and artists, always proud to be working with Skimstone Arts, humanity important part of the group. I meet many people at Skimstone Arts, it's talent and happy to be part of this group and to make this film short. For my first experience in England it's always supporting and helping us. Appreciate what it is doing.”*  
– Co-creator, via WhatsApp.

*“It's great to see the breadth of activities that Skimstone Arts deliver, with all opportunities enabling young people to learn and develop a range of musical and social skills. With Skimstone's emphasis on youth voice, young people are part of the process from design through to delivery. Their approach to navigating the pandemic, putting young people first and deftly transitioning to online delivery is laudable.”*  
– Funding partner.



Associate Artists Samuel Lamptey and Nii Kwartelai; Artistic Director Claire Webster Saaremets working with participants in Byker; Associate Artist Sheryl Jenkins collaborating via Zoom with Claire and Pete Saaremets; Co-creation meeting with Nii Kwartey Owoo, Claire Webster Saaremets, Samuel Lamptey, Pete Saaremets, Nii Kwartelai and Smajo Beso

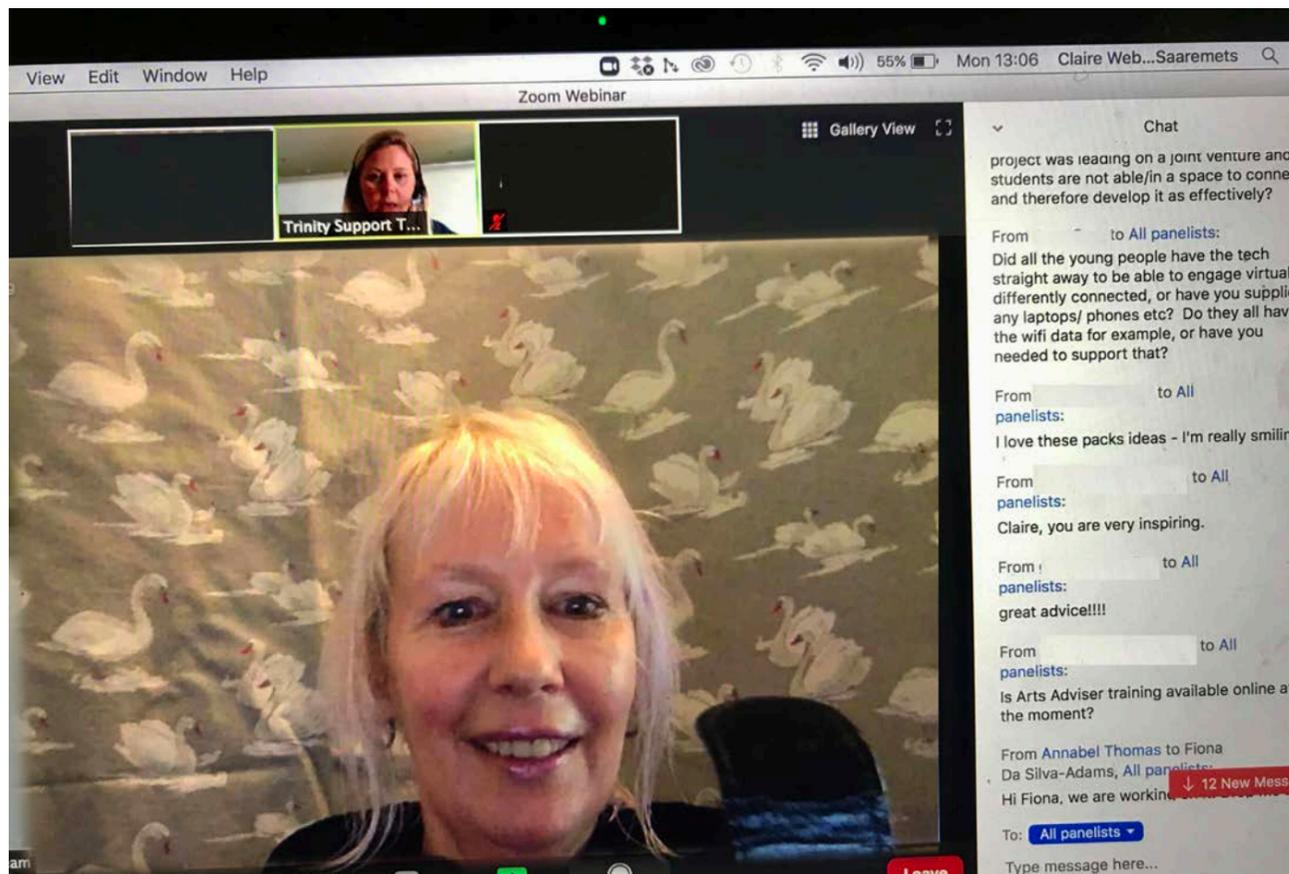


Image: Claire was asked by Trinity College, London to share her approach to embedding Arts Award during lockdown and Covid-19 restrictions. May 2020.

***"I would like to thank you for today's webinar. It was so thought provoking and evident that your approach to community engagement invests so much care and commitment into your co-collaborators."***  
**— Partner-organisation.**

*"The process used was designed to give voice to those who might otherwise feel rather marginalised, and the feedback indicated that people very much appreciated this. The process of creating songs, soundscapes and spoken word pieces also stretched people's creative experiences. The work is very engaging and everyone who has listened to it has found it both challenging and inspiring."*

— Partner organisation.  
*"Skimstone Arts are a vital part of the cultural ecology. Everything they do has their core beneficiaries at its heart. Skimstone are uniquely placed to provide quality, long term engagements for young people facing multiple barriers to*

*accessing arts provision. And they do it with such a sense of ambition and fun! Furthermore it feels mutually respectful and there is always a sense that everyone is learning and growing together."*  
 — Funding partner.

We have constantly reflected on what makes co-creation work, or not work, in a diverse range of settings including: our professional performances, our Skimstone studio engagement, our work in community spaces and public places.

For us, co-creation is a form of collaborative innovation; ideas are shared and improved together, rather than identified only with an artist or a beneficiary or a participant.



Image: Byker resident, Penny rehearsing with Pete Saaremets, Lead Artist

Skimstone Arts definition is:  
**To equally explore an agreed idea, concept, narrative through a shared creative process, where specific artistic skills, knowledge and techniques sit alongside lived experiences and a supported willingness to try and make something together.**

We have developed this approach over the years to reinforce our social and political belief that equality within humans to engage productively, curiously, experimentally and respectfully together, challenges the top-down model. We see this philosophy having much more impact on the quality of the relationship,

quality of process, quality of work created.

*"It was adventurous and fun to do (sessions). Realised I had talents that I never knew I had, like spoken word"*  
 - Byker resident

Working in community settings and virtually online, we perform together, alongside the co-created work, validating what we are asking of our co-collaborators and also how we as artists learn our living and are passionate about ways of looking at life. De-mystifying the artistic process mean that everyone has a part to play and specific skills and techniques to share together and learn from.

*"Thank you again for supporting me to write and rediscover prose. I have started writing daily (in fact I can't stop writing) and this is actually starting to make more sense than (and take over from) my other art practices. I have even shared some work online so that's a massive step!"*

- Byker Resident

*"I have always felt passionate about what I do especially when we collaborate with others...However, the idea of co-owning a piece of artwork was something I realized through working with Skimstone Arts this time. This happened as I watched Peter and 'L' work on their song.*

*I always thought of the finished artwork belonged to the participants, which doesn't take away my enjoyment of helping throughout the process. But, seeing Peter and 'L' work, showed me that if it wasn't for the two working together, the piece wouldn't exist, Peter provided the instrumental work to lyrics provided by 'L'. Her artwork wouldn't be the way it is without me teaching her the skills to create it. Therefore, something I came out with in this project, is that I should value my role in the creative process as an equal to the person creating it and vice versa."*  
 - Kema Sikazwe, Associate Artist.

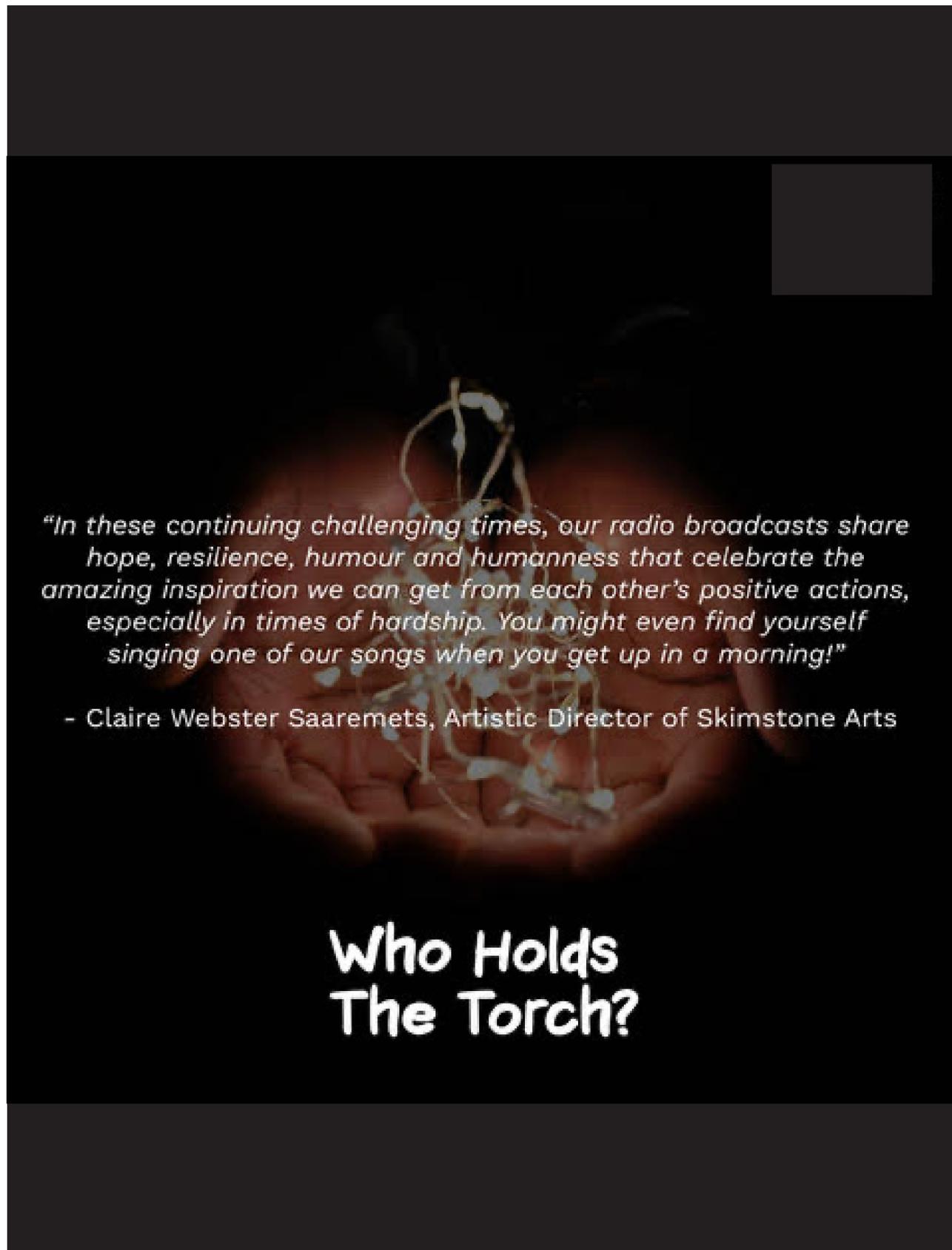
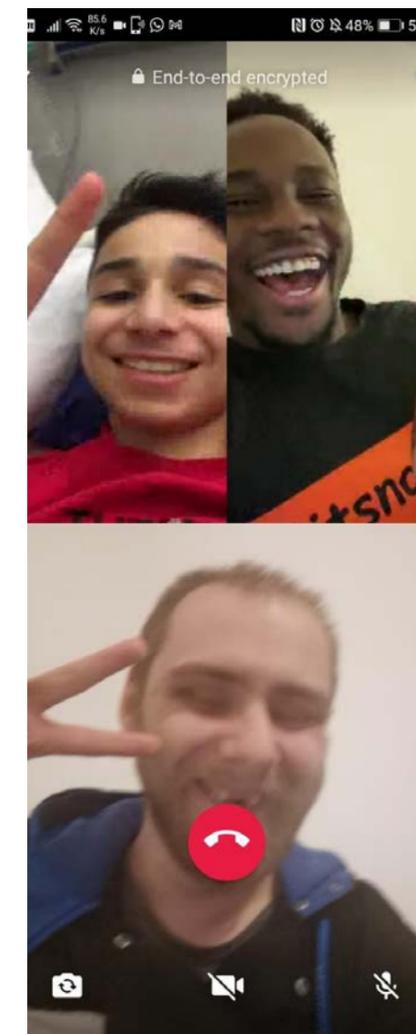


Image: Who Holds the Torch?, January 2021



Left image: Associate Artist Kema Sikazwe recording Daniel's song. Right image: Image: Daniel collaborating with Associate Artist Kema Sikazwe and ECHO artist Magpie on a song for Who Holds the Torch?

An inspirational collaboration took place as part of our Holocaust Memorial Trust event, **Who Holds the Torch?** Daniel, a young person struggling with sudden illness, collaborated with Associate Artist Kema Sikaswe and Echo artist Magpie, via Zoom to co-create a rap called Day by Day.

From his hospital bed, Daniel worked alongside Kema and Magpie to create a song about hope and being a light to others. The song was recorded and performed by Kema and Magpie and broadcast as part of the **Who Holds the Torch?** event in January on Skimstone Radio and at UNITY Festival March 2021.

***"Thanks to you Claire, Peter, Kema and everyone at Skimstone Arts for giving Daniel a voice at the UNITY Festival & for bringing together a force for goodwill and love to everyone at such a difficult time."***

**- Daniel's Mum**

# 8

## Our programme for 2020/2021

From April 2020 to March 2021 we created five events – Here's Your Seat, Imagine Your Seat, Who Holds the Torch?, UNITY Festival, and Whispers & Shouts.

In August 2020, and in response to the pandemic, **Doorbells: Covid-19** was created as a film short and developed from **Doorbells: Dreaming of the Future** production and film. It was screened and presented via Zoom-video conferencing across two webinars with Q&A and discussion.

Working in partnerships with academics at Northumbria University, **Doorbells** continues to be an evolving humorous story that asks questions about where and how we live as we grow older. It continues to initiate the use of the arts to support people to make well-informed housing decisions and produce evidence on how to improve older people's housing services and alternative housing options.

Throughout the summer we safely used our music and performance skills to 'busk' and create singalongs outside care homes at the request of St. Anthony's Care while their residents and clients were unable to socialise or receive visitors inside due to the lockdown.

We continued to create more accessible opportunities working across online platforms in video and audio, launching a new online service, Skimstone Radio.

The combination of live online radio, video conferencing, digital animation, and podcasts allowed us to innovate the delivery and participation of five significant projects: **Here's Your Seat**, **Imagine Your Seat**, **Who Holds the Torch?**, **UNITY Festival**, and **Whispers & Shouts**.



These achieved a combined audience reach of nearly 7,000 and broke new ground for us as a platform; we engaged new audiences to experience and engage through Skimstone Arts.

**Here's Your Seat** was a compilation of musical and visual artworks created during the 2020 spring/summer lockdown; along with the radio shows, the visual works were projected from a community cafe window.

**Imagine Your Seat** was an international and intergenerational online radio show of songs and poems responding to the autumn/winter restrictions and a 42-minute film of them with photographs

and animations along with the radio shows, the visual works were projected from a community cafe window to new audiences.

**Who Holds the Torch?** was a radio event in January 2021 to mark Holocaust Memorial Day 2021 with songs and stories made with Skimstone musicians, Newcastle residents, refugee families, young people and artists from around the world; the theme of being a light in the darkness was chosen by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust.

The **UNITY Festival** in March 2021 was a three-day event of online 'stages' that presented digital performance and workshops. Music and story-telling explored community,

nature and social action. The festival was headlined by British-Nigerian singer-songwriter Bumi Thomas, who presented her specially commissioned set from Nigeria, and the festival also featured international sound recordist and composer Chris Watson.

**Whispers & Shouts** was a collaborative project with Durham University which explored stories about equality, diversity, belonging and identity with academic and professional staff and students, culminating as a radio programme on 30 March 2021.

# 9

## Launch of Skimstone Radio

*“Hearing what I’d done with Kema on the radio on my phone was great [...] and you said that the world was listening [chuckles] what about that!”*

**Co-creator and community resident**

Skimstone Radio - as a platform during the challenges and restrictions of a pandemic - has offered us a new digital resource that resonates with our co-creators and audiences through its accessibility and global appeal.

Songs for *Who Holds the Torch?* were made regionally, nationally and internationally thanks to our digital connectivity.

Our partnership work has strengthened our strong relationships with national organisations including national Holocaust Memorial Day Events with Newcastle City Council, Well Newcastle Gateshead, Durham University, the Bosnian refugee community through our relationship with Smajo Beso, Radio GaMashie, Ghana, Nii Kwartey Owoo (our radio manager)



[Image: International reach of Skimstone Radio]



Image Top: Skimstone Radio presenters, Claire Webster Saarems and Kema Sikazwe, Technical rehearsals with Nii Kwartey Owoo and Pete Saarems. Image Bottom: Claire and Kema, hosting live radio broadcast - Imagine Your Seat]

# 10

## UNITY Festival

*"I like to imagine that music across every culture has evolved from being influenced by sounds from the natural world and 'Notes from the Wild' will celebrate a diverse range of sounds and rhythms from across the planet from Antarctica to the Arctic."*  
- Chris Watson, Sound Recordist and Composer

**UNITY Festival** was a free online music and storytelling festival that celebrated community, nature and social action. It launched via Zoom with a diverse programme of live performances, presentations, workshops, practice sharing, spoken word and storytelling. The festival launch broadcast attracted 2,296 listeners and 1,000 online attendees experienced the programmed presentations, performances and workshops across the weekend.

Environment was one of three distinct strands of the festival, with a series of curated presentations and discussions aimed at our diverse audiences and the communities we work regularly with, as well as working in partnership with like-minded organisations including Counterpoints Arts, Youth Music and The Natural History Society of Northumbria.

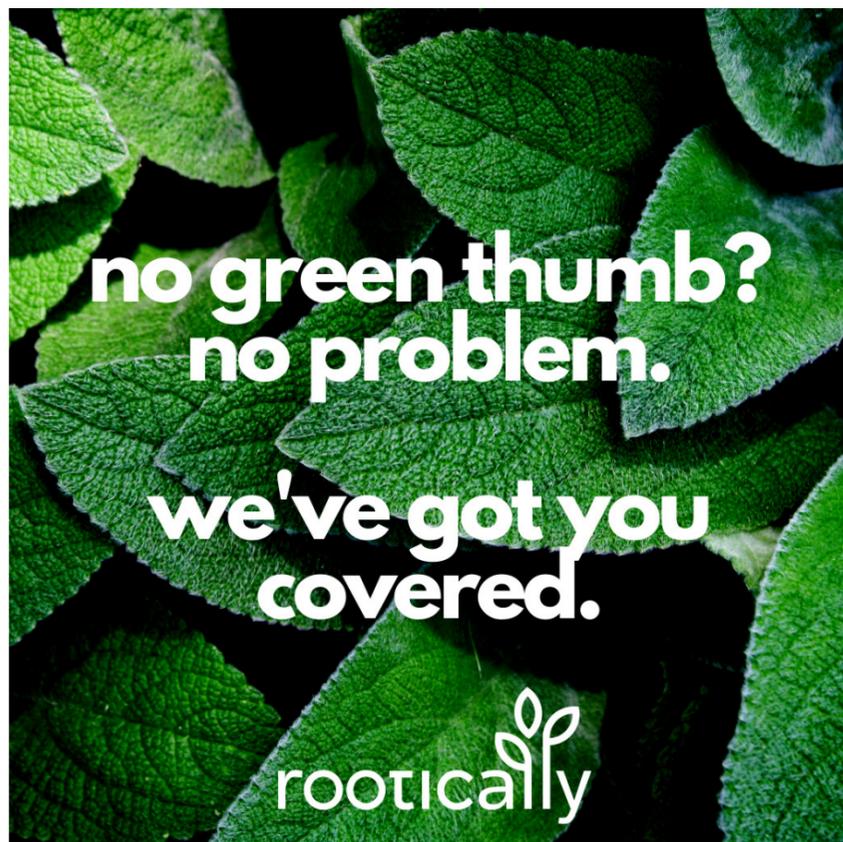
Opening **UNITY Festival** with a keynote presentation was award-winning sound recordist and composer Chris Watson presenting *Notes from the Wild*, a journey of stories and videos about his passionate interest in recording the sounds of animals and habitats from around the world.



## UNITY Festival: Environment

*“Thank you for putting this broadcast together and for highlighting more challenges that we face and the creative energy that can create fresh motivation to so many people. We can think about our current times and relating to survival and how we can keep positive.”*

### - Audience feedback, UNITY Festival



In Rooting for Nature environmental activist **Azra Tanovic**, co-founder of Rootically, shared her unique insight to her work and a revolutionary approach supporting urban gardening and the importance of how urbanisation should include nature and how we can make that happen. **Gordon Port** from the Natural History Society of Northumbria presented Citizen Science in Action, sharing why insects are important, places for audiences to visit and information about citizen science projects audiences could take part in.

*“It’s not just art for art’s sake, it’s art to transform, transcend, and create a better world.”*  
– David Stickman Higgins, Associate Artist

As part of the festival we invited audiences to respond to **calls to action** – to engage in the natural environment, listen to our surrounding environment and consider their roles as active citizens and look at the world around them in a new light. This ranged from the talks given by Chris Watson and Gordon Port, who gave an insight into the natural world, to the amazing openness of headliner Bumi Thomas, who spoke eloquently about the



current political climate of the United Kingdom and the world. This approach was also adopted by members of the **Young Artists Collective** and **ECHO artists**, using field recordings and incorporating environmental soundscapes into their artworks, songs and music.

*“Kudos to Skimstone Arts - this is a great festival thank you”*  
- Audience feedback, UNITY Festival

*“Thank you to everyone involved, it has been a pleasure to be part of such a wonderful, inspiring and positive event!”*  
- Audience Feedback, UNITY Festival

*“I feel a lot more people really got interested in whatever we are doing and that’s one thing that stood out to me. And another thing is having faith in humanity, the fact that people really care for the environment, to actually create something for the environment means a lot, and I believe that moving forward we will take it a bit further into action, so from all that we have said and created, we will put it into action and ensure the future of the environment.”* – Samuel Lamptey, Actor and founder of Radio GaMashie, Ghana

*“There’s definitely a hope when you see other artists. It doesn’t seem like a lot changes day to day, but when you get a load of artists who are like minded and believe in similar things come together and get the activist and creative juices flowing it instills a kind of hope and faith in humanity.”* – Skimstone ECHO Artist, UNITY Festival evaluation and reflection session

## UNITY Festival: Music

*“The people who attended, some of them wouldn’t have attended an in person festival because of various reasons, but we were able to offer this. Sometimes people are isolated, and may not be able to move about or they have social anxiety, and this is an alternative we’ve made happen, and it’s really good.”*  
– Nii Kwartey Owoo,  
Associate Artist



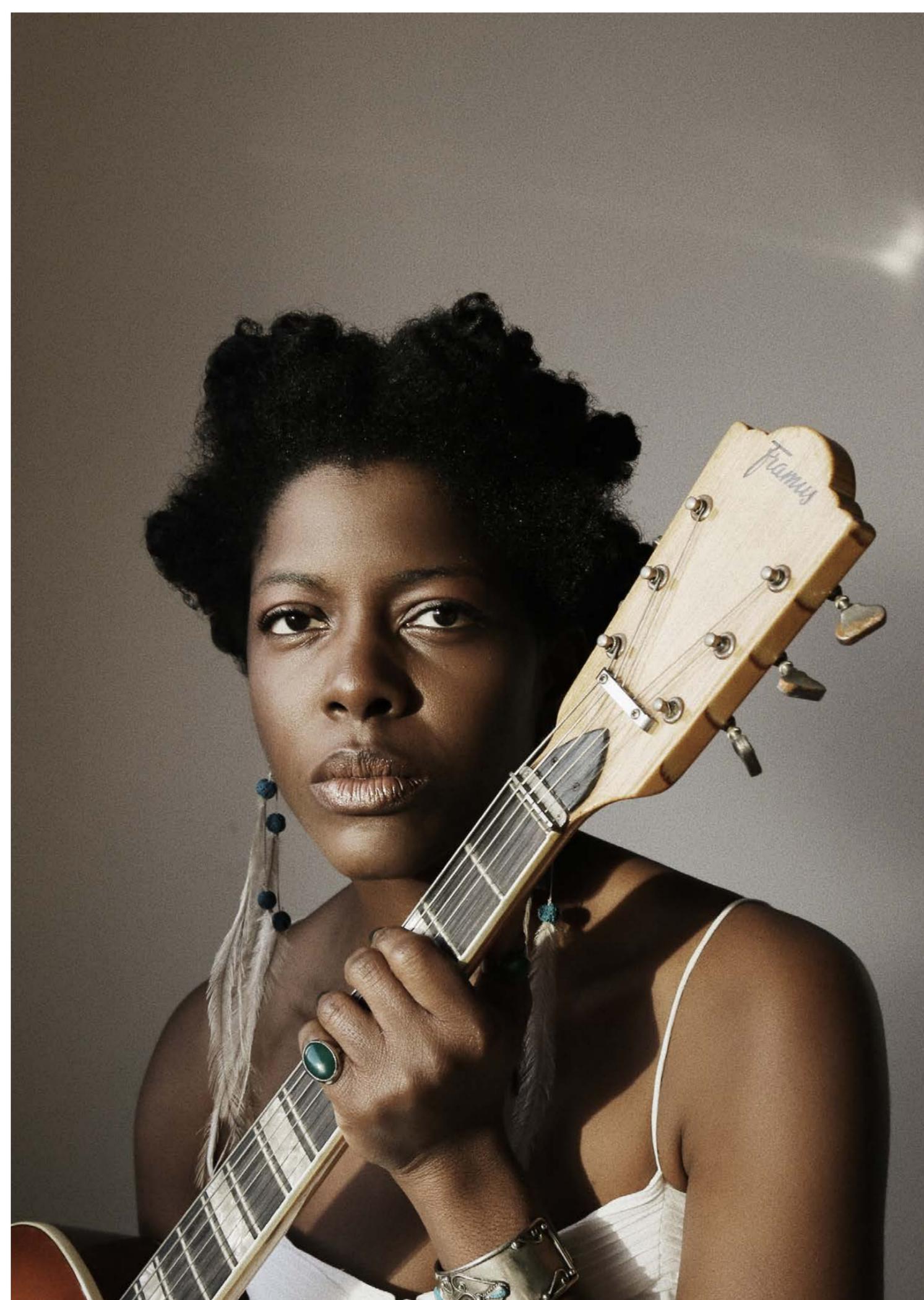
The online **UNITY Festival** programme showcased our work with diverse artists, **Young Artist Collective** and community co-collaborators. Music lovers were encouraged to pop into the ‘Music Tent’ to take part in a host of participatory and artist-led singing, songwriting, drumming and rapping workshops, whilst the ‘Chill Out Tent’ was open to anyone interested in relaxing and unwinding and being immersed in shared stories, nature and fantasy.

Over the two day festival and alongside our resident associate artists we were delighted to headline Newcastle rapper Kay Greyson and British-Nigerian singer-songwriter Bumi Thomas with a specially commissioned set for **UNITY Festival** which was enjoyed by over 1,000 people online across 23 countries.

*“Kudos to the Skimstone team for making a Zoom event actually feel playful and have an easy Saturday vibe!!”* - Audience member

*“It has been a real delight to work with you on this project. Your essence, vision and energy is really special, creative and more importantly authentic.”*

- Bumi Thomas



# 11

## Knowledge and Exchange

*"I feel that Northumbria University owes you and your fantastic organisation so much Claire - you have opened up extraordinary possibilities."*

**Dr Cathy Bailey,  
Associate  
Professor Ageing  
and Well Being**

This year we have continued to influence and inform debate around inclusion and diversity. Not only is strong partnership working at the core of our method, but we also see partnerships as being key in developing longer-term relationships and delivering greater value for all our beneficiaries and creating more interesting and effective work for our audiences.

Academically, our work with universities informs and influences knowledge and research into people living with dementia and/or ageing, engaging young people on the fringes of society, artistic approaches to inclusion, diversity and equality. We work with peer arts and health organisations and major universities, to prompt public debate on these matters.

In August 2020 and in reposes to the pandemic **Doorbells: Covid 19** was created as a film short and developed from **Doorbells: Dreaming of the Future** production and film. It was programmed as part of FUSE Covid-19 Seminar Series, screened and presented via Zoom across

2 webinar events followed by a Q&A and discussion. Working in partnerships with academics at Northumbria University, **Doorbells** continues to be an evolving story, and through our national webinars, pioneers the use of the arts to support people to make well-informed housing decisions and produce evidence on how to improve older people's housing services and alternative housing options.

*"Incredibly important story to talk about and fantastic intergenerational audience. Surprisingly entertaining for such a complicated and difficult subject. I started to know her and now want to know what happens next – what does she do? A soap opera! Some beautiful filming and loved the songs."*  
- Audience feedback

*"I think this film is a fantastic way to engage people in talking about age, loneliness and social interactions during lockdown. I think this film is far more powerful to people than a Powerpoint."*  
- Audience feedback



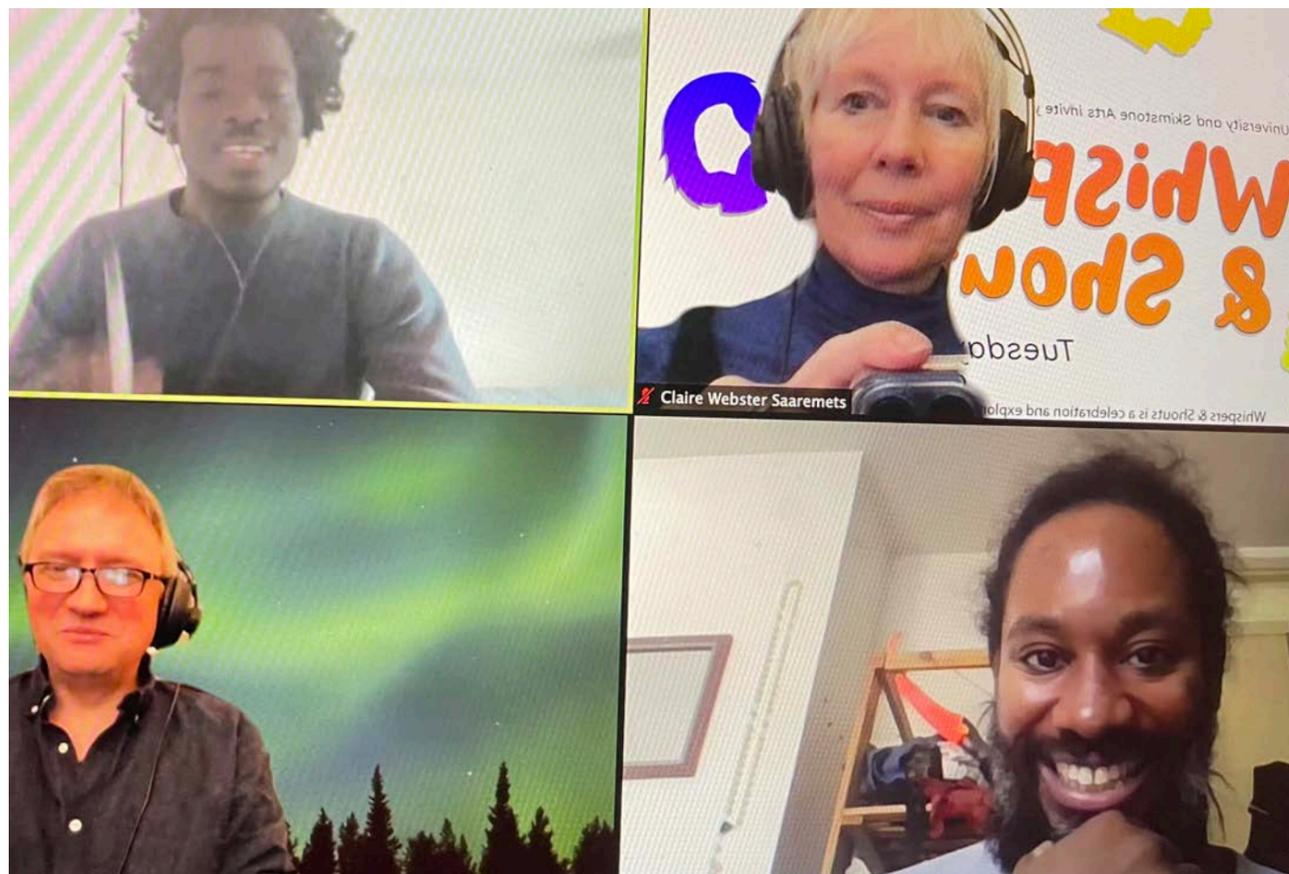


Image: Nii Kwarty Owoo, Pete Saaremets and presenters Claire Webster Saaremets and Jason Arday

Our university partnerships expanded this year with a commission by Durham University to create a special Radio broadcast **Whispers & Shouts** celebrating and exploring stories, collected by those who engage at Durham University, including professional and academic staff and students, about equality, diversity, belonging and identity with staff and students at Durham University.

Broadcast via Skimstone Radio, **Whispers & Shouts** promoted a clear commitment to ensuring and demonstrating a positive culture that shouts about

inclusion, acceptance and value, and also addresses whispers of uncertainty and disempowerment.

*"The work with Skimstone Arts on producing Whispers & Shouts exceeded our expectations by a considerable margin! Claire was brilliant to work with and alongside the musicians and tech support of Skimstone to connect with a wide range of staff and students in the University. The process gave them voice and reflected this back to the University community in incredibly creative ways."*

- Professor Charlotte Clarke, Durham University

During **UNITY Festival** we facilitated and hosted a practice-sharing event for young people in partnership with Switch It in Hartlepool, Standing Upright in North Tyneside and Jack Drum Arts in Durham. Working collectively with Skimstone Arts, young people and music leaders shared and listen to special songs and stories about making music in lockdown and reaching out into their communities.



Image: Hadi, member of Young Artist Collective receiving his Bronze Arts Award with Pete Saaremets, Lead Artist

**"I've learnt how to approach work differently, take constructive criticism and build on my strengths as I work on my weaknesses."**  
-Evaluation feedback

Through our work across music education we continued to provide music tuition across Zoom and offer opportunities for formal and informal learning across our programme. We continue to be committed to sharing a clear, high quality arts practice with our **Young Artist Collective** and older people, alongside our own **Ensemble** of professional artists. We hold high expectations and aspirations for all of Skimstone's artists.

As part of our **Youth Music** partnership we held a practice sharing exchange on 23 September with our Fund B Youth Music organisations.

During this year we were proud to support 5 young people successfully achieving **Arts Awards**. 4 members of the Young Artist Collective achieved bronze awards and 1 gold award was achieved by ECHO Artist, Ho-Yin.

*"A really detailed and thoughtful portfolio which shows excellent evidence of personal arts development and leadership. Ho-Yin should be congratulated for his dedication in pursuing and developing his art form practice, as well as his commitment to working on his volunteer placement and all of the detailed research and reflection he has included in his portfolio."*

- External moderator.

# 12 The Year Ahead - Artistic Director

The last 12 months has involved some of the most challenging and unprecedented times however for Skimstone Arts it has been one of our most productive years yet.

From April 2020 – March 2021 we produced 5 events – **Here's Your Seat, Imagine Your Seat, Who Holds the Torch?, UNITY Festival and Whispers & Shouts** alongside webinars and weekly music and arts sessions with our **Young Artist Collective** and **ECHO Artists**.

The Skimstone Arts artistic and production team responded as positively as possible to the massive challenges of the global pandemic, ensuring we kept working to create and connect with those most at risk of isolation and adapting to the ever changing and socially distancing environment. We continued to embed pastoral care across all our work.

This year we learned the power of bringing together all our different groups of artists, co-creators and young people, to work on our national themes, therefore having an exciting feel of equality of voice and platform for each project and event. It enabled

us to extend our audiences to include a more global and intergenerational reach, alongside placing all the co-created songs, spoken word, films, poetry, sound pieces in one place showing equality and value for everyone taking part.

The medium of radio also enabled us to place all the carefully crafted and edited artworks (songs, stories, spoken word etc) equally alongside each other, from all partner organisations/ artists and reach global audiences.

Next year our exciting programme looks to continue supporting young people and communities in the region and Ghana, Bosnia, Europe etc, and present our co created work on a regional, national and global stage, which will be a key focus for Skimstone Arts as we seek to continue to develop a blended model of working and co-creating as we look ahead to 2021 – 22.



We are excited about the re-emergence of **Reality Boots** band and gigs, our tour of Doorbells: Dreaming for the **Future**, national Holocaust Memorial Day Events 2022, Refugee Awareness Week and Bosnia Memorial Events 2021 and of course our **UNITY Festival** 2022.

For Skimstone Arts we will continue to fly the flag of arts and social change to those who need to feel visible, and for a planet that needs nurturing, to remember how

maybe hearing song or a story makes us question ourselves and the actions of those around us.

We will be moving to a new accessible and long term studio site in Newcastle upon Tyne that opens up a whole range of opportunities for outdoor working, and creating new communities of cultural activity.

I would like to personally thank our incredible artistic and production staff, young

leaders, Board of Trustees, funders and partners, individuals and communities who have shared this year with us, with their commitment, dedication, vision and creativity, governance and support. We must continue to remember those struggling and isolated and also celebrate a year to collectively be proud of.

**Claire Webster Saaremets**  
Artistic Director

# 13

## Financial Summary

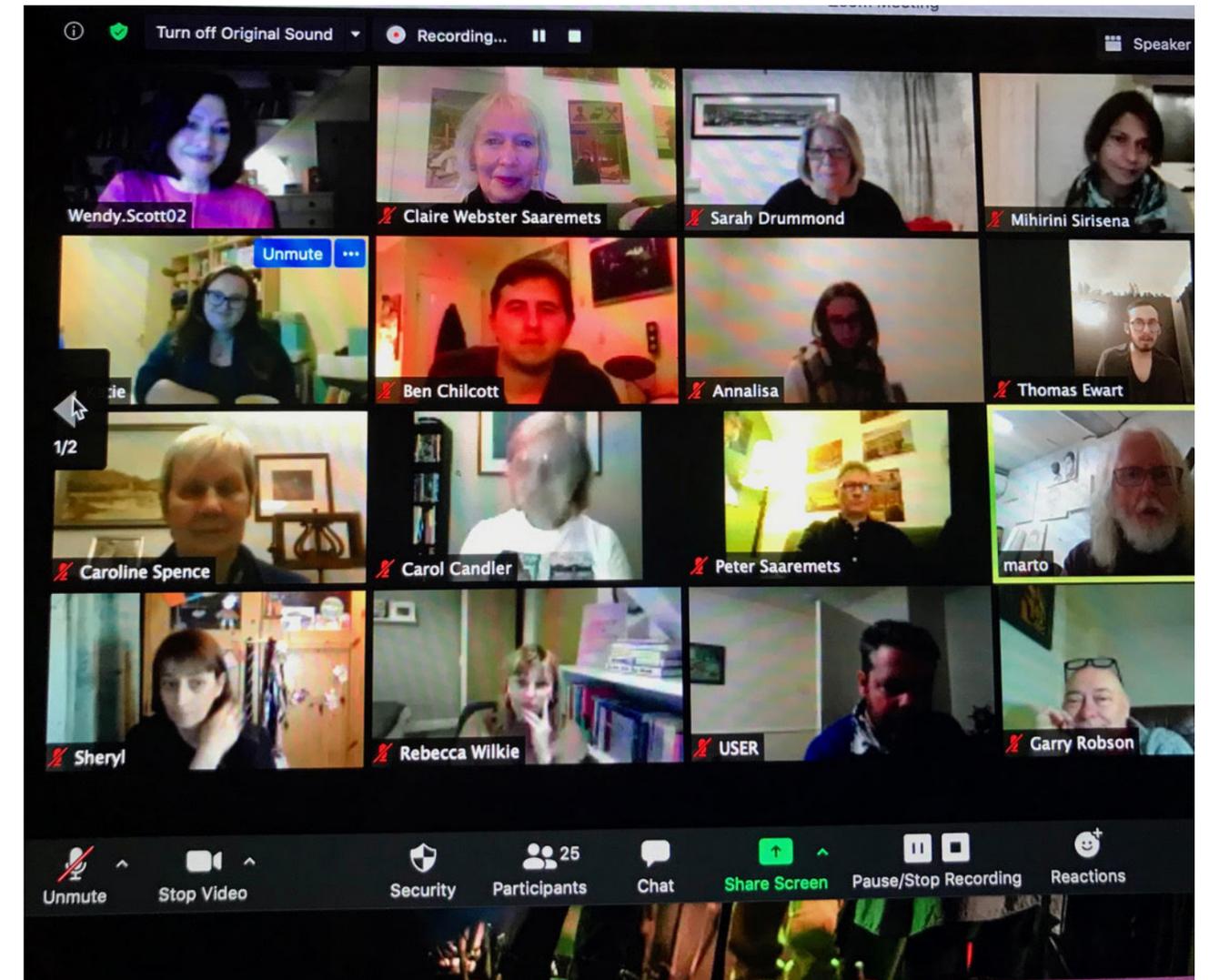
### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

For the year ended 31 March 2021

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
<b>Income from:</b>					
Donations and legacies	6	1,363	4,130	5,493	15,610
Charitable activities					
Grants and contracts	7	-	122,542	122,542	151,836
Donated services	8	7,485	-	7,485	10,799
Other trading activities	9	17,080	-	17,080	3,654
<b>Total income</b>		<b>25,928</b>	<b>126,672</b>	<b>152,600</b>	<b>181,899</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>					
Raising funds	11	-	440	440	17,744
Charitable activities					
Operation of the charity	13	6,069	153,690	159,759	137,116
Donated services	12	7,485	-	7,485	10,799
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>13,554</b>	<b>154,130</b>	<b>167,684</b>	<b>165,659</b>
<b>Net income/(expenditure) and net movement of funds</b>		<b>12,374</b>	<b>( 27,458 )</b>	<b>( 15,084 )</b>	<b>16,240</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>					
Total funds brought forward		13,336	44,823	58,159	41,919
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>		<b>25,710</b>	<b>17,365</b>	<b>43,075</b>	<b>58,159</b>

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities

Please see Trustees Report and Accounts for more information about our governance and finances for 2020-21



# 14

## Board, Staff and Artistic Community

### Trustees

**Wendy Scott**  
Chair

**Carol Candler**  
Secretary

**Katie Dixon**  
Treasurer

**Sarah Drummond**  
Vice Chair

**Rebecca Wilkie**  
Trustee

**Garry Robson**  
Trustee

### Creative Patron

**Martin McAloon**

### Staff & Volunteers

**Claire Webster Saaremets**  
Artistic Director

**Pete Saaremets**  
Lead Musician

**Cristina Armstrong**  
Creative Producer

**Julie Maxwell**  
Financial Administrator

**Claire Cockcroft**  
Marketing and  
Communications Manager

**Annalisa Buratti**  
Project Coordinator

**Quinn Green**  
Assistant Project Manager  
and Echo Artist

**Magpie Macavelli**  
Assistant Project Manager  
and Echo Artist

**Ho-Yin Wong**  
Assistant Project Manager  
and Echo Artist

**Joe Hodgson**  
Student Placement & Festival  
Steward

**Meg Barton**  
Festival Steward

**Alexandra Bannon**  
Festival Steward

**Aki Lunn**  
Student placement

**Chris Ford**  
Evaluator

**Bex Mather**  
Evaluator

**Mihirini Sirisena**  
Evaluator

**Thomas Spence**  
Volunteer and Alumni

**Jessica Johnson**  
Volunteer and Alumni

**Dan Burrows**  
Volunteer and Alumni

### Artists

**Keith Hill**  
Associate Artist and  
Ensemble

**Liz Corney**  
Associate Artist and  
Ensemble

**Kema Sikazwe**  
Associate Artist and  
Ensemble

**Nii Kwartey Owoo**  
Associate Artist and Technical  
Manager

**Samuel Lamptey**  
Associate Artist

**Nii Kwartelai Quartey**  
Associate Artist

**David Stickman Higgins**  
Associate Artist

**Martim Dinis**  
Associate Artist

**Sheryl Jenkins**  
Associate Artist

**Simon Tarrant**  
Associate Artist

**Smajo Beso**  
Lecturer and Collaborator

**Chris Watson**  
Sound Recordist and  
Composer

**Bumi Thomas**  
Singer-songwriter and  
Guitarist

**Kay Greyson**  
Rapper and Performer

**Bethany Ellen Coyle**  
Music Practitioner, Singer  
and Composer

**Azra Tanovic**  
Environmental Activist and  
Co-founder, Rootically

**Gordon Port**  
Zoologist and Ecologist

### Young Artist Collective / Reality Boots

Ben Chilcott  
Hadi Baraei  
Olamyde Olabisi  
Thomas Ewart  
Maddie Smyth  
Malachi Hood  
Arthur Vane  
Harry Thomson

### Young Artist Collective

Lily Edwards  
Jordan Bainbridge  
Elena Valitova  
Alice Young  
Phillip Melody  
John Young

### ECHO Artists, Leadership Team & Reality Boots

Nicole Davis  
Quinn Green  
Magpie Macavelli  
Ho-Yin Wong

### Communities

Youth Music Partnerships, UK  
Sage Gateshead, UK  
Standing Upright, North  
Tyneside, UK  
Switch it, Hartlepool, UK  
Jack Drum Arts, Durham, UK  
Counterpoint Arts, UK  
Byker community, UK  
Walker community, UK  
St Anthony's, Walker, UK  
Radio GaMashie, Ghana  
Madame Teatro, Portugal  
Bosnian community, UK  
Friends of the Drop In,  
Sunderland, UK  
The Bostey, Walker, UK  
MINE, Byker, UK  
Walker Workers, UK  
Durham University, UK  
Northumbria University, UK  
Newcastle University, UK  
Elders Council, UK

# 15

## Funders & Partners

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



COUNTERPOINTS.



Well Newcastle Gateshead



Fogo Fund



community association  
st. anthony's  
here for you



High Sheriff  
Award



Newcastle  
Cultural Invest-  
ment Fund



Newcastle  
Fund



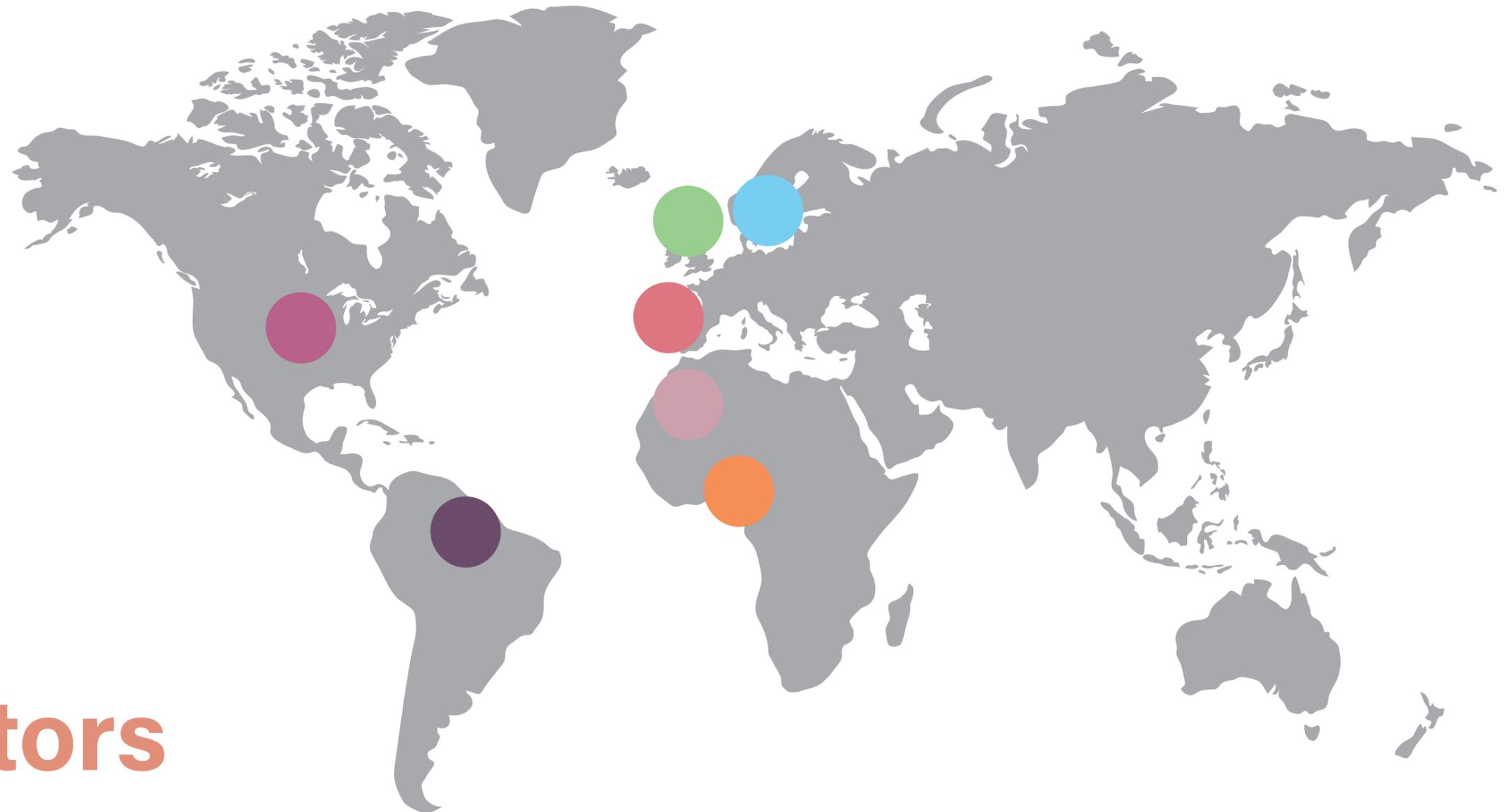
Wellesley Fund



## International Reach

---

Ghana  
Portugal  
Nigeria  
USA  
Brazil  
Sweden  
UK



Artists  
Contributors  
Audience

# 16

## Contact

### Skimstone Arts

Skimstone Studios  
2nd Floor  
i4 Quayside  
Albion Row  
Quayside  
Newcastle Upon Tyne  
NE6 1LL

### Email

[claire@skimstone.org.uk](mailto:claire@skimstone.org.uk)

### Phone

07803 670 654

### Online

[www.skimstone.org.uk](http://www.skimstone.org.uk)

 [www.facebook.com/SkimstoneArtsEnsemble](https://www.facebook.com/SkimstoneArtsEnsemble)

 [@Skimstone\\_Arts](https://twitter.com/Skimstone_Arts)

 [@skimstonearts](https://www.instagram.com/skimstonearts)

