



Skimstone Arts Governance Report and Accounts 2020/21

Skimstone Arts

Skimstone Arts works with diverse artists and those at risk of isolation, to create work with, for and about the world that matters to them

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Reference and administrative details

Charity number: 1182284

Company number: 06261728

Registered office and principal address:

Skimstone Studios 2nd Floor, i4 Quayside, Albion Row, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 6QE

Independent Examiners: Connected Voice

Bankers: The Co-operative Bank

Our Trustees

For the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, the Board of Trustees is the Board of Directors of the charitable company and is referred to as “the Trustees” throughout this report.

The Trustees of Skimstone Arts during the year and to signing this report are as follows:

Wendy Scott - Chair

Sarah Drummond - Vice Chair

Carol Candler - Secretary

Garry Robson

Rebecca Wilkie

Katherine Dixon – Treasurer

Liadi Mudashiru - appointed June 2021

Chair's Introduction

Wendy Scott Chair, Skimstone Arts

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.

Trustees' Report For the year ended 31 March 2021

Structure, governance and management Skimstone Arts is a company limited by guarantee (registered number 06261728) and a registered charity (registered number 1182284) and is governed by its memorandum and articles of association.

Skimstone Arts is directed by a board of seven Trustees who are responsible for ensuring that the organisation meets all its statutory, contractual and social obligations.

Our beneficiaries are all of the individuals and communities we work with to co-create artistic work.

Governance

In the period covered by this report, Skimstone Arts had six Trustees. Trustees take decisions collectively. They meet formally every quarter for full board meetings at which they review activities, finances, company performance, business management, public benefit, and the voluntary input of Trustees.

The Board also holds an Annual General Meeting, typically in September, where we celebrate and showcase our collaborative work with our artists, beneficiaries, funders and invited guests. Our annual meeting in 2020 took place compliantly as a live Zoom video meeting online.

Between March and September 2020, the Board met virtually every month by video meeting to monitor operational and artistic risks and the changing societal needs presented by the Coronavirus pandemic.

The board assimilates updates to the Charity Governance Code. We have sub-groups for Trustees on fundraising, finance, risk management, and for trustee succession and board development. We have no committees which take decisions on behalf of the full board. The rules for the authority and delegation of the Trustees is set in our governing document, as is the scope of our sub-committees.

Appointment and induction of Trustees

In March and April 2020 Trustees conducted a governance mapping exercise which was integrated with our Theory of Change plan and identified four areas of knowledge and experience which we seek to develop. In October 2021 the Board welcomed a new trustee in line with these aims. Liadi Mudashiru was appointed June 2021. The Board hopes to conduct another round of trustee recruitment by March 2022.

Historically Trustees were recruited and appointed to the Board based on outreach discussions and shortlisted recommendations offered by Trustees and external advisors to the organisation. Going forward, Skimstone Arts is committed to deliver a fair, open recruitment process and will use ever-wider outreach methods to raise awareness of our vacancies in a diverse range of communities, places, and sectors. Going forward, Skimstone Arts is committed to continuing to deliver a fair open recruitment selection process and will use ever wider outreach methods to raise awareness of our vacancies in a diverse range of communities, places, and sectors.

New Trustees are typically inducted by the Chair and are provided with a range of resources to support their understanding of the charity's activities.

In June 2021 we welcomed new trustee Liadi Mudashiru.

Objectives and aims

Skimstone Arts works in the sectors of arts, culture, wellbeing, health and heritage; we are intergenerational, helping artists and those identified as being 'at risk of social isolation' including: children and young people, older and elderly people, refugee communities, people of colour and disability, and with the general public. We work with a range of freelance artists and producers on a project-by-project basis.

Our co-creation approach nurtures artistic expression through the equal process of sharing skills, stories and techniques to create new and original work together; we build relationships between established artists from around the world who work with our regionally-based emerging artists and with people at risk of social isolation in our North East communities. Together we express what matters to each person – individually and collectively – and seek to influence social understanding, compassion, and positive change.

In the period covered in this report we worked directly with 465 people, and calculate that we had a ripple-out audience of nearly 7,000 who engaged with the co-created work.

We are one of the North East's leading companies for inclusive arts practice and social action and have dedicated expertise in high-quality work co-created with vulnerable young people, older people, and refugee communities.

In April 2020 we consulted and created our approach to Social Connection in the Time of Social Distancing as our resilience and work with people at risk of isolation became more relevant than ever before.

It shaped the year ahead in which we used new platforms to plan, make and share existing and fresh work, and simultaneously increase wellbeing, for people to feel more connected and less isolated.

Our commitment to communities resulted in an increase in our reach and engagement of co-creators (beneficiaries) working with our emerging artists and established artists and lead staff.

Our reflections and response as allies with people whose lived experience is of racism and racial injustice resulted in new connections and artistic work with communities locally and globally.

Our purpose

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

Skimstone Arts supports diverse artists and those at risk of isolation, to create work with, for and about the world that matters to them.

Our aims

Skimstone Arts aims to create collaborative music, performance and art with artists and researchers, and develop artistic practice with diverse individuals and communities to reflect challenges in society.

Our general aims include:

- Creating a voice for our artists and promoting inclusion, collaboration, ownership and respect for anyone who has a social and political right to make artworks but may face barriers to do so.
- Making accessible touring music-based theatre and site-specific performances, exhibitions and gigs that reflect current stories and themes relating to today's cultural landscape, changes in heritage and identity, and we explore what we think about the world today.
- Adapting to the constraints and societal needs during the Coronavirus epidemic and lockdowns and post-lockdowns to co-create and support people via the digital-sphere and by working in-person in socially-distanced safe ways.
- Being actively inclusive and opening up opportunities for all less-represented groups including LGBTQAI+, people of colour and across cultures, people who face challenges with struggling mental health, poverty and illness.

Theory of Change

We use a **Theory of Change** model to describe how and why our charitable objects serve our beneficiaries, to review our progress and to track and illustrate over time the resultant change to the people we work with and their communities.

Theory of Change model:

By: working with diverse artists, people at risk of isolation and like minded organisations

To: support them to create work that is with, for and about the world that matters to them and to share what we learn in the process

We will: engage increasingly diverse audiences in quality arts activities and stimulate debate and action around key social challenges

This will: help improve connectivity, confidence and wellbeing for the people and artists we work with and lead to greater skills and engagement in increasingly high quality arts activity.

The model helps us to deliver our four key ambitions:

Ambition 1: Artists

To create nationally recognised, quality artistic work, with diverse artists, about the world that matters to people and communities today.

Ambition 2: Communities/Audiences

To engage with people in diverse communities to produce artistic work that explores and shares engaging stories and is accessible and meaningful to a broader range of audiences.

Ambition 3: Wider sector

To collaborate with researchers and arts, health and social sector professionals, to challenge and instigate debate around the role of the arts in civic change and help find more effective ways to use quality artistic work to improve engagement and well-being.

Ambition 4: Our organisation