CELEBRATING AGE

‘WE WANT PEOPLE TO HEAR THAT THERE IS HOPE – WE’RE DOING IT, AREN’T WE? SO OTHER PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA MIGHT THINK, “I CAN TRY THAT!”’ – Every Third Minute Festival Curators
We wanted to create a festival of theatre and arts that explored ideas around dementia, challenged perceptions and truly represented the lived experience of dementia from a variety of angles.

In order to creatively explore experiences of dementia in the most balanced way, 9 people - five people living with dementia and four supporters - were recruited to form a Festival Curators group in May 2017 with responsibility for steering the artistic content and processes of the festival.

This group of Curators then programmed productions and co-created the activity that featured at the Festival, supported by the expertise of the professional teams at Leeds Playhouse. They selected the title of the Festival based on the statistic that someone in the UK develops dementia every three minutes.

Every Third Minute: a festival of theatre, dementia and hope, ran from 9 February to 31 March 2018. The 7-week Festival, attended by over 7,500 people, was made up of 12 productions (in-house and visiting companies) including 3 new plays co-written by people living with dementia, 4 training programmes, 16 workshops and a tour of care homes.

The project had three distinct phases:
- Planning
- Delivery
- Legacy

In this document we have outlined some of the key successes and learning from these three phases.

The impact of the Festival has been most significant on the Curators – and the positive ramifications of their involvement continue to develop. We were also incredibly pleased to receive such positive feedback from audiences, artists and participants alike. The approaches we took as a result of the Festival continue to impact on the day-to-day activity of the theatre, demonstrating a notable ripple effect.

We are looking at ways we can build on the authentic co-creating we already engage in at the Playhouse, as well as investigating how some of our internal processes could be adapted in line with our dementia friendly approach, which results in greater inclusivity for everyone.

The Festival programme is available here: bit.ly/ETMProgramme
The year leading up to the Festival focused on:

- Recruitment and preparation of the Curators group
- Planning the Festival through a co-production process
- Co-creating artistic content for the Festival
- Forming or further developing partnerships with external organisations or within the Playhouse

Key milestones in this phase included:

- Assembling the group of Curators and discovering their opinions, skills and aspirations for the Festival
- The Curators meeting with the various departments working on the Festival
- Selecting the Festival name and branding
- Agreeing the full programme for the Festival
- Contributing to PhD research as study participants

Our learning in this phase included:

Adapting programming procedures

Programming pre-existing work for the Festival was approached slightly differently to the theatre's usual programming mechanism. Curators designed a bespoke dementia friendly experience of interest process to invite pitches from theatre companies and artists wishing to create new works. This partnership working was critical to the success of the project as, amongst other benefits, it ensured there was local sector support for the initiative.

We found that creating different levels of partnerships was helpful in terms of communicating clear expectations on both sides. These partnerships worked at their best when:

- The project was mutually beneficial, adapting to the aspirations and priorities of each partner
- Contributions of partner organisations were recognised with a financial settlement to cover any additional costs and staff time dedicated to the Festival
- The Festival offered platforms for partners to share their work with new audiences or Artistic directors
- We were in dialogue - learning together, assessing, responding and adapting as each project developed

Developing the branding and marketing material

It was crucial to us that the title and sub-title of the Festival were owned and created by the Curators. Equally, by their design any logo or artwork would naturally be dementia friendly.

The process we used to achieve this was as follows:

- Words and phrases generated during conversations in Curators meetings were presented back to Curators as title options - focused on words and priorities
- Presenting a limited number of options in each meeting to avoid overwhelming them
- Allowing time for debate and disagreement before consensus
- Visual prompts and presentation of branding ideas on various scales
- One-to-one discussion between Curator and supporter to amplify voices and ideas

Developing partnerships

Every Third Minute enabled us to strengthen long-standing partnerships and initiate new ones. This partnership working was critical to the success of the project as, amongst other benefits, it ensured there was local sector support for the initiative.

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DELIVERY IN NUMBERS

12 Festival volunteers
9 dementia friendly performances
8 performances in care homes
12 Dementia Friends sessions for 257 people aged 5 - 75
7 dementia friendly consultation sessions with Still Alice production team and cast

This ensured a familiar face to ease nerves and specific knowledge of each artist’s performance plan in order to offer support or redirection if necessary.

- In-the-moment opportunities for audience members to feedback on performances, celebrating the creativity of artists
- Acknowledging - through pre-show information and on the day – the crucial role of the audience in helping to create a supportive performance environment.

Musicians with dementia also performed in 2 front-of-house concerts, at the press night of Still Alice and at the festival’s closing night.

Timing & volume of activity

Throughout we were highly conscious that a 7-week Festival was very intensive for many of the audiences we were reaching out to. We managed to pace the audience's journeys across the programme by including some events for people living with dementia (e.g. The Garden, Performing Our Lives) and some for specialists in the sector (e.g. TimeSlips, Getting Along) and some for a general theatre audience (e.g. The Purple List, The Nature of Forgetting).

Young people and dementia

Leeds Playhouse Young Theatre’s Memory and Beyond performances involved 200 young people aged 5 – 19, who took part in Dementia Friends information sessions before devising their own work inspired by experiences of dementia. Discussions about dementia rippled out to family members, with many young people determined to make a difference to the lives of people with dementia through kindness and understanding. Though it was challenging at first, particularly for the younger Youth Theatre members, it proved to be an incredibly powerful and moving choice which has seen family members come together.

Front of House

Festival Volunteers and staff were provided with bright yellow t-shirts with the Festival logo printed on the front and ‘Happy to help’ on the back – ensuring that visitors had an immediate and obvious point of contact. Festival Curators’ t-shirts noted ‘Festival Curator’ on the back, affording them the status they had earned with such intense involvement and commitment to the Festival. All public-facing staff received detailed communication about the Festival, either through in-person briefings before events or printed/e-mailed information, ensuring that members of the wider Playhouse team could confidently represent the Festival’s ethos and aims.

Every Third Minute | 5

HighLighted activity & Key learning

Planning

February 2017 - January 2018

“I loved that the Festival was curated by people living with dementia; that they were the voice behind the Festival and that it embodied such hope” – audience member

The 7-week Festival period focused on:

- Delivery of the Festival activity to the highest possible standards at all times
- Continued engagement of the Curators
- Support and management of a dedicated Festival Volunteer team
- Audience development
- Co-creation of artistic works

Key milestones in this phase included:

- Press night of Still Alice which signified the start of the 7-week Festival
- Still Alice was a key contemporary play in our Spring season, exceeding its target
- Delivery of all activity, in particular the two weeks where the Festival was at its most intense
- Script development week for three new short plays
- Developing a Youth Theatre term (203 young people) to exploring the ideas behind living with dementia
- Development days for new commission, Young and Wise

Our learning in this phase included:

Dementia friendly performance platforms

In the design and delivery of one of our events, This Is Us, we realised that there was plenty to be found in common between our scratch events for emerging artists and performance platforms for artists living with dementia. This Is Us included poetry, music, movement, shadow-puppetry and a best-selling book reading. The event was curated and hosted to foster a generosity between audience and performer, and to include opportunities for the audience to offer written and verbal feedback to artists.

Aspects that were crucial to the successful delivery of this event were:

- A varied programme with a range of art forms, highlighting the individuality of artists with dementia
- Detailed planning between artists and the Festival Director, who hosted the event
CO-CREATING ARTISTIC CONTENT

Three

Three was a series of three new short plays co-written by people with dementia and professional writers. This unique and pioneering element of the Festival aimed to tell rarely-heard stories from the perspective of people with lived experience of dementia. The plays received extremely positive feedback both in the theatre and on the subsequent tour of care homes.

The three plays were:

I See Land Ahead
by Bob Fulcher & Dominic Gately
A painting class transforms into the high seas and a rural farming community as two old friends replay their childhood adventures.

Hamari Yaadain / Our Memories
by Hamari Yaadain Memory Cafe & Ming Ho
Real life, vivid and honest conversations exploring dementia and community in a South Asian Memory Cafe.

A Horse Called Freedom
by Rosa Peterson & Barney Bardsley
A woman tells her story in a poetic monologue, using her imagination to rise above and beyond her everyday world.

In developing these pieces, we learned the importance of adapting our processes, by:

• Encouraging each co-writing partnership to create a bespoke process that worked for them e.g. audio-recording, working in familiar spaces, taking trips to relevant locations to spark discussion, co-editing
• Allocating additional time during script development week for discussion around the intentions behind the pieces with the writers
• Introducing very clear directives in rehearsal room discussion e.g. ensuring that only one person was speaking at a time and allowing time in between discussions to ensure conversations could be followed by all.

The co-writers attended the performance at the Playhouse with family and friends, after which Rosa and Barney took part in a fascinating and moving conversation to open up their writing process to an interested and supportive audience. Three toured Leeds care homes and community venues, reaching audiences of people living with dementia who would ordinarily be unable to attend the theatre, and the staff who support them. Performances reached local authority, not-for-profit and private care home providers. This tour included a partnership with National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), who offered Research Cafes alongside the performance to demonstrate the importance of people with dementia being involved in research into the condition.

A key aim of the co-writers involved in Hamari Yaadain was to educate people about dementia, as they felt culturally-specific understanding could be improved. We hope to continue to support this aim in future partnership work.

Co-writers who visited care homes to watch their plays found the experience particularly moving, and as a result, the Curators developed plans, supported by a small grant from National Institute for Health Research, to develop and deliver their own creative sessions in Leeds care homes beyond the Festival.

“I think differently about people living with dementia as artists and creators - poets, musicians, storytellers. They have lots to say, some of it about their experience of dementia and plenty that’s just about them, their interests, passions and talents” - audience member

“I now have a better understanding of the particular difficulties faced by people in BME communities with dementia and their carers. I have also gained insight into the personal experience of living with dementia” - audience member

Director
Alexander Ferris

Actors (Leeds Playhouse and tour)
Susan Cookson, Jem Dobbs, Manish Ghandi, Balvinder Sopal

Actors (script development)
Jem Dobbs, Shireen Farkhoy, Olwen May, Arian Nik, Sally Ann Staunton

Music
Fran Wyburn

Music cover
Richard Sabey

Tour Manager
Maggie De Ruyck

Stage Manager
Leann Young

Original concept and project lead
Nicky Taylor
The period since the Festival has focused on:

- Ongoing support of Festival Curators
- Evaluation of the Festival and the process
- Dissemination of findings
- Development of PhD thesis

Key milestones in this phase included:

- Remounting A Horse Called Freedom for the New Vic Theatre’s Live Age Festival
- Recruiting a director for a future full scale production of Maggie May
- Continuing regular Curators sessions
- Workshop presentation by Curators at Dementia Congress
- Winning the National Dementia Care Award 2018 for Outstanding Arts and Creativity in Dementia Care & being finalists in Youth Organisation of the Year 2018 at The Alzheimer’s Society Dementia Friendly Awards

Ongoing support of Festival Curators

Following conclusion of the Festival programme, the Curators continued to meet weekly with the Festival Director to carry out evaluation, to process the experiences they had shared and to plan for the future. The group had worked incredibly closely together, with a clear sense of purpose, which many were keen to maintain. As we had imagined might be the case, personal circumstances shifted dramatically for some members of the group, who dealt with ill-health and family events, supported by each other. The death of Curator Peter Jervis, in March 2018, was a particularly difficult moment for the Curators and Festival team, and we supported each other at Peter’s funeral and the remaining

Festival events at which Peter would have been involved. Peter’s wife Nancy continues her involvement in the group, which she says has given her a purpose after Peter’s death. It is important to note the vital need to ‘hold’ a group, and individuals, emotionally during such an intensive project. It is essential to ensure staff are equipped to do this, and offered support themselves. The ‘emotional labour’ of such work is often overlooked but was found to be a key aspect of this project.

Curators have taken up opportunities to develop their skills further through workshops aimed at increasing confidence with public speaking, to help with disseminating findings from the Festival.

Two of our Curators were invited to take part in an older people’s performance project in September 2018 with The Performance Ensemble and Leeds Playhouse, supported by members of the Festival team.

Producers at New Vic Theatre, Stoke invited us to stage A Horse Called Freedom as part of their Live Age Festival in October 2018. The writers joined a panel discussion after the show to articulate the process of co-writing.

Evaluation of the Festival

Feedback on Festival events was gathered by the Playhouse Creative Engagement and Marketing teams supported by the Festival Curators. Several Curators chose to carry out face-to-face conversations with audience members after they had watched a show, finding that people shared experiences openly when they realised they were talking to people with lived experience. Stories gathered during Curators’ conversations and through online evaluation questionnaires helped to articulate the impact of the Festival, following the evaluation model of Most Significant Change. Curators co-evaluated by selecting the stories and themes they found most significant. Direct quotes are used to illustrate each theme on page 10.

Dissemination of findings

In September 2018 the Curators started planning for their workshop presentation to UK Dementia Congress in Brighton. This was a 75-minute workshop to share learning from the Festival and for the Curators to use their skills to demonstrate how people living with dementia can be involved in many different creative ways. This was a huge undertaking for the group, including overcoming nerves about public speaking, but also about the logistics and anxiety of a long journey and staying somewhere unfamiliar. A huge amount of planning and individualised support was offered to Curators by staff, and crucially, by mutually supporting each other. As a result the trip was a success, and a further bonding opportunity for those involved.

The Curators continue to reflect on the process in different ways. One of the writing partnerships involved in Three co-wrote a journal article for a special edition of Dementia Journal written by people living with dementia. This article was accepted with no amendments—a rare feat in academic publishing.

The Playhouse produced a film about the Festival to which Curators contributed interviews. The film is available to watch here:

/bit.ly/ETMFilm

Northern Film School students produced a short film specifically about the experiences of the Festival Curators, which is due for release in 2019.

An academic evaluation of Three’s tour of care homes was undertaken by Leeds Beckett University’s Centre for Dementia Research. Results of the evaluation are presented in a

The Curators will deliver their creative sessions in care homes throughout 2019. They will co-create a one-day conference on living well with dementia with colleagues at NHS England in September 2019. They also have aspirations to offer a smaller scale Festival in the future, and are involved in welcoming people with dementia to the newly redeveloped Leeds Playhouse, which reopens in October 2019.

Press coverage in numbers

12,304,987 people reached through the media campaign

3 pieces of national broadcast coverage, including features on BBC Breakfast and BBC Radio 4’s Today programme

99 pieces of local press coverage, including a feature on local news BBC Look North, and interviews with two of the festival curators on BBC Radio Leeds

38 pieces of national press coverage including a feature for BBC News Online and a podcast episode and feature for Financial Times

140 pieces of press coverage in total
People living with dementia and their supporters were invited into decision-making positions to create a theatre festival exploring dementia:

‘It made me want to fight dementia more.’
‘We had a voice.’
‘It’s like building up muscles, using our skills, getting braver.’
‘I realised I still have skills to offer, that I haven’t used since I was working.’

‘Being invited to take part can be a lifeline when you can’t do things any more. It gave Peter a purpose, something to aim for, and nice people to see.’
‘By involving people with dementia, we can offer a more balanced representation of dementia – one that acknowledges the losses and challenges, but also shows that people are getting on with life, and sometimes taking brave new adventures.’

Local, national and international impact:

‘We all worked together – it strengthened our partnerships and started new ones.’
‘We attracted artists and audiences from across the UK, Ireland, Spain, Norway, USA and Japan.’

Conversations about dementia were more honest and open:

‘I have now told many people – friends and work colleagues – about my dad’s condition – something I’d found difficult to bring up in conversation before. His involvement was a good platform to open up conversation about dementia.’

‘Some people won’t talk about dementia, they don’t understand it, and some don’t want to understand it. By telling my story I hope people will be more educated.’
‘I have felt very alone with dementia, but here I could feel there were other people like me.’

Young people learned about dementia:

‘Young people learned the importance of helping others and being kind to people who may act differently from them.’
‘A child played the steel pan with Eugene, sharing the music with him.’

‘The way the young people tried to show how the brain works was brilliant.’

People with dementia felt valued:

‘We felt recognised as artists.’
‘The pure love that I saw in how people were treated.’
‘When I first heard the actors saying the words, I couldn’t believe they were mine.’

Understanding increased that people with dementia have a lot to offer:

‘People think there’s nothing wrong with me because I go out and do things. They say I must have the best kind of dementia. I hope now they understand what that’s like.’
‘I’ve started playing (piano) more, my confidence increased.’

‘People often think people with dementia are stupid. We’ve shown that people with dementia can still do things.’
‘I thought dementia was a really degenerative disease and you couldn’t remember things, couldn’t do anything and to see him being so creative, and explaining how he feels within his poetry, it was totally moving, really beautiful.’

Visiting companies / performances

Awake But Always Dreaming by Hannah Peel
Blank Tyre by Dylan Cole
The Garden by Spare Tyre
The Nature of Forgetting by Theatre Re
The Purple List by Ian Baxter & Libby Pearson

Visiting artists / speakers

Barney Bardsley (Our Time), Beate Bednar (Kompagni Krapp, Norway), Alex Clough (Cognitive Shift), Sebastian Crutch (Created Out of Mind), David Cutler (The Baring Foundation), Claire Ford (We engAGE), Sylvie Fourcin (Artlink), Sue Gilmarten (Cognitive Shift), Charlie Harrison (Created Out of Mind), Nicky Hatton (University of Winchester), Susan Howard (Living Words / Created Out of Mind), Hanne Jones (The Dignity Center, Norway), Romi Jones, Alan Lyddiard (The Performance Ensemble), Tamara McLong (The Performance Ensemble), Wendy Mitchell, Rowena Morton (Cognitive Shift), Charlie Murphy (Created Out of Mind), Damian Murphy (Getting Along), Namron, Kaley Nolan (Created Out of Mind), Leo Nolan (Cognitive Shift), Kristine Nordby Simonsen (Kompagni Krapp, Norway), Arti Prashar (Spare Tyre), Magdalena Schanberger (Curious Shoes), David Slater (Entelechy Arts), Julian West (Music for Life / Created Out of Mind), Julia Weston (Winston Churchill Memorial Trust), Joan Williamson (TimeSlips), Fran Woodcock (Our Time).

Leeds Playhouse productions

A Horse Called Freedom by Rosa Peterson & Barney Bardsley
Hamari Yaadain / Our Memories by Hamari Yaadain Memory Café & Ming Ho
I See Land Ahead by Bob Fulcher & Dominic Gately
Maggie May by Frances Poet
Memory and Beyond by Leeds Playhouse Youth Theatre
Still Alice by Christine Mary Dunford, based on the best-selling novel by Lisa Genova
We are always keen to share our learning from the Festival and consult on the work we do at the Playhouse, particularly related to dementia friendly performances.

Please contact nicky.taylor@leedsplayhouse.org.uk or maggie.deryuuck@leedsplayhouse.org.uk if you are interested.

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Leeds Playhouse and its Festival Curators are extremely grateful to Arts Council England, The Baring Foundation, and our additional funders and partners for the support to realise Every Third Minute.

Note: In June 2018 the organisation’s name was changed from West Yorkshire Playhouse to Leeds Playhouse.