

PROJECT REPORT

A MOMENT'S PEACE THEATRE

SHARED SPACE

SPACE + CREATIVITY + IDEAS





ABOUT A MOMENT'S PEACE

A Moment's Peace Theatre Company (AMP) exists for artists, participants and audiences to explore the links between the personal and the political, the local and the global. We create innovative performance projects and work with community groups to deliver high quality artistic work that explores and makes visible marginalised narratives and experiences.

The common thread running through all our work is that our projects encourage artists, audiences and participants to **re-imagine the world we live in**; to see it as a place brimming with the **possibility of positive change** and to recognise their capacity to be part of enacting it.

For over a decade AMP has been dedicated to creating participatory arts projects that open up the cultural landscape to participants from a wide range of geographies, ages and socio-economic backgrounds. Exploring and developing work with one of society's most marginalised communities, including those negotiating the UK immigration system. AMP have experience in expanding creative practice through artistic play and experimentation, opening up opportunities, and making a difference to Scotland's cultural and political landscape.

Shared Space was a pilot project as part of a research and development stage supported by Glasgow Life's Arts Development Scheme, Creative Scotland and The Robertson Trust.



ABOUT SHARED SPACE

Shared Space was an ambitious pilot project which looked to establish a new and accessible mixed art-form company that specifically focused on engaging and making work with individuals affected by the complex and hostile UK immigration system. The space invited in and developed work with those negotiating migration systems at all levels; exploring and expanding creative practice through artistic play and experimentation. The pilot project saw A Moment's Peace together with project partners Küche and renowned arts venue Tramway host monthly sessions from April 2019 to February 2020. Shared Space's multidisciplinary workshops were delivered by a range of arts practitioners and were a place where food was shared, where conversations about best practice on accessibility and ethics were held, where barriers facing artists within the immigration system were dismantled and where every third session culminated with a public open-mic session/scratch event for participants and audiences, including professionals and amateurs, to showcase their work and ideas.

Creative, experience, method, meeting people, new person, good place, changing. I enjoy and practice my little English. Meeting lovely persons, and with different cultures and many nationalities. These project make me happy because I leave my home and I change environment and I break my routine when I come.'

Shared Space Participant



PROJECT REACH

From April 2019 to February 2020 Shared Space hosted and engaged:

11

CREATIVE WORKSHOPS

PARTICIPANTS

50

26

ARTISTS

PUBLIC SHARING EVENTS

3

132

AUDIENCE MEMBERS

VOLUNTEERS

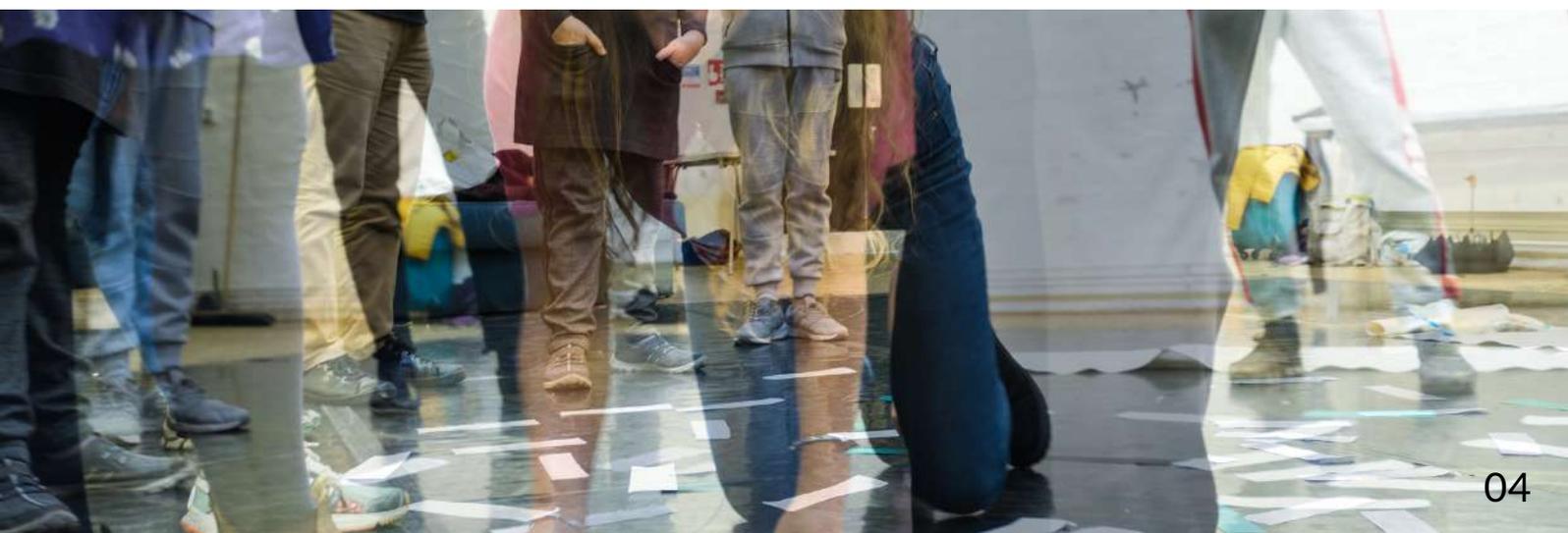
3

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

'I discover myself and my talent. Writing poems, or a piece of story and now I feel good in writing.' **Shared Space Participant**

Shared Space worked with a total of 50 participants from over 10 different countries and speaking over 9 different languages. Project participants included both men and women between the ages of 18 and 75. The entire Shared Space project created a platform for one of society's most marginalised communities of people, people who are often given the dehumanising label of 'refugee' or 'asylum seeker'. Project participants gained creative skills in writing, storytelling, dance, music, zine making, and sculpture. The creative opportunities for Shared Space participants have resulted in them understanding themselves as artists; showcasing their work to public audiences and/or becoming arts audiences. Shared Space project participants have also gained long-term benefits including but not limited to creative confidence, English language skills, social and cultural connections, a better understanding of their own personal skills and talents, and empowerment to vocalise their own personal insights and experiences.

'When I arrived in the UK I was alone and had no family or friends. I had no community around me... I was feeling that this loneliness brings my level of confidence down. Then someone tell me about Shared Space so I came joined and welcomed by everyone... I started feeling that now I am in my home and with my family. I found different and very informative activities here which increased my knowledge, enhanced my experience and quality of life. I will always be very thankful to all here...' **Shared Space Participant**



PROJECT WORKSHOPS

From April until December 2019 Shared Space hosted monthly multidisciplinary workshops exploring writing, storytelling, dance, music, zine making, and sculpture. Each workshop took place at Tramway Studio, led by a guest artist and supported by the project's Co-Facilitator (Catrin Evans), Project Coordinator (Deborah May) and Associate Artist (Najma Abukar). Shared Space workshops focused on an ethos of care and compassion, encouraging conversation and activity, posing questions, influencing and affecting personal and social change. Importantly project workshops were not a space where individuals were repeatedly being asked to re-tell 'their story' or 'represent the refugee experience' but instead Shared Space workshops were dedicated to exploring and expanding creative practice through artistic play and experimentation. Project workshops looked to eliminate all financial, physical and linguistic barriers to access and participation by providing childcare, travel expenses, disabled access, nourishing multicultural food, Arabic, Kurdish and BSL interpreters. Shared Space also hosted 2 reflection and evaluation sessions in January and February 2020 which explored project/participant outcomes, changes and developments, collecting

testimonies, personal reflections and beginning to look forward to what might be next for the group

'One thing I like most about this group is I am able to forget about my worries; my circumstances for some time and spend time with people who are coming from different cultures and different backgrounds. But also I feel more confident to share my stories in the storytelling workshops and I feel like I can speak and feel proud how this group involve us and thinking about us. I enjoy and feel proud to be part of this group. This group reflect on my life.'

Shared Space Participant



PROJECT EVENTS

Across the entirety of the project, Shared Space hosted 3 public 'Pay What You Decide' open-mic/scratch events which took place on Sunday afternoons at Tramway. Shared Space's series of scratch events provided an informal and supportive opportunity for project participants to raise their artistic profiles; sharing poetry, stories, song and sculpture to a public audience. Project participants were also heavily involved in the hosting of the scratch events. The events also showcased the work and ideas of other professional and developing artists with lived experience of migration. Some of the artists that Shared Space's scratch events engaged with are playwright Sara Shaarawi, poet Sawson Al-Areeqe, musician Aref Ghorbani of Musicians in Exile, the all-female drumming band Daffodils and the Hidden Rhythms Creative Collective; a newly formed group made-up of songwriters and performance makers. Shared Space's scratch events celebrated multi-lingual and multi-disciplinary work in a relaxed, open and socially conscious event, an event which better reflects the diversity of the city, and its' current political and social climate.

The workshops made me feel included, confident, useful. I feel like this is a space where everyone can express themselves freely and safely. It is the same for the Scratch Events, it is nice to see people come forward and share their talent.'

Shared Space Participant



PROJECT ARTISTS

Shared Space's guest artists included but not limited to dancer and choreographer Farah Salah, storyteller and performance artist Amadu Khan, socially engaged visual artist Paria Goodarzi and Gnawa musician Omar Affif. 7 of the 9 guest artists that Shared Space worked with were artists from minority ethnic communities with lived experience of migration. Each invited artist delivered a workshop based upon their arts practice; exploring their potential as community practitioners. In addition to the project's guest artists Somali/Scottish photographer Najma Abukar engaged with Shared Space as the project's Associate Artist. Najma's insight both as an artist and experience of systems of immigration has guided the project's ongoing discussions on how we best support the needs of both community participants and aspiring professionals. Najma Abukar also photographed the full Shared Space project; its workshops and events.

'Shared Space is about the workshop process rather than the outcome. How participants obtain new skills and feel comfortable to get involved, away from being objected, questioned... The most important thing is that the project is not organised by people who want to take advantage, but led by the group themselves.'

Visual Artist Paria Goodarzi



"Vital. Creativity is an amazing avenue for transformation and growth. It is a way to understand and express and know both ourselves and the world at large in greater depth. Shared Space's project aims, promoting a place for people within a cultural landscape and offering access and engagement into that is much needed..."

Poet Rebecca Tantony





PROJECT OUTCOMES

- Shared Space engaged a diverse community of 50 participants (35 regular participants) from over 10 different countries all with lived experience of migration. *'I loved getting to know people and learning about different cultures. Everyone has a different background and that is what makes this group special.'* **Shared Space Participant**
- 11 x monthly workshops engaging with a variety of different artforms. The majority of sessions were led by a guest artist of which 7 were artists with lived experience of migration.
- Participants explored different artforms, developing their creative voices, confidence and resilience; empowering them to take part in creative political dialogue and publically perform their work. *'Shared Space for me is tolerance, safety, welcomeness, curiosity, artistry, storytelling, showcase of talents, community arts, togetherness and selflessness.'* **Shared Space Participant**
- For some project participants the Shared Space workshops and events have also resulted in them understanding themselves as artists; showcasing their work to public audiences at renowned arts venue Tramway and/or becoming arts attendees who feel confident entering into cultural spaces, diversifying Scotland's arts audience.
- Successfully reduced barriers to arts and community participation through a commitment to accessibility; providing travel expenses, food, interpretation (Arabic, Kurdish and BSL) and childcare.



PROJECT OUTCOMES

- Participants have observed improvements in health and well-being, perceptions of self, others and their environment, improved their English language skills and made social connections. *'Shared Space is very important for me, to engage with a group because I am an asylum seeker and I am all the time under stress. The group specifically helped me to spend time good time with other people who belong to other countries. Poetry writing really inspired me because I expressed myself for the first time in my life just because of Shared Space.'* **Shared Space Participant**
- 9 guest artists have developed and improved their community arts facilitation techniques, reflecting on ethics of engagement, creative expression, storytelling, language and space.
- 3 x scratch events provided an opportunity for artists navigating the UK immigration system to test out material in front of a live audience within a relaxed and supportive environment.
- Supported Somali/Scottish photographer Najma Aubkar in a year-long professional development position as the project's Associate Artist. A position which has also involved supporting her to undertake a personal research and development project which responds to her experience of the Shared Space project so far. *'Personally, it has been such a privilege to witness artists of many disciplines come into the space and with such admiration learn from each one of them. I believe spaces and opportunities such as Shared Space are necessary and valuable, especially for those navigating the immigration system.'* **Associate Artist Najma Abukar**
- Workshops and events have helped to change the aesthetic, cultural and political landscape of contemporary Scotland; helping to diversify who is producing culture.
- Artists, audiences and the wider sector have expanded their creative capacity and ethical understanding of engaging in intercultural artistic practice.

ADVICE FOR ARTISTS

Believe in us!
Have fun!
Be on time
Do your own thing
Interested in Art work
The Group is creative and keen.
Do not patronise us.
Stay wild.
energetic + active
I like performing
This group has opened up space to advance



WHAT NEXT?

Shared Space has provided a stepping stone to establishing a creative group specifically for individuals navigating systems of migration. This is a creative space that opens-up a diversity of experience, talent and skills, as well as having a potential long-term future impact on the city of Glasgow; both its people and its arts sector.

Through the practice of our monthly workshops Shared Space participants, and the artists they have worked alongside, have started to develop a vision of what a dedicated company could look like; what its approach and principles might be, and what its priorities would need to be in order to best support the development of creative individuals. The following set of principles (see page 14) provide a framework for artistic work underpinned by collaboration and framed by an ethics of care. We hope for these principles to support the formation of a long-term multidisciplinary arts company, but also believe that they can be used by other projects, organisers and artists from across Scotland who are engaging artistically and participatory with individuals who have refugee and migrant experiences.

As you know when I arrived in the UK I was alone and had no family or friends. I had no community around me where I can go and sit and share my problems, worries and thoughts. I was feeling that this loneliness brings my level of confidence down. Then someone tell me about Shared Space so I came here. Joined and welcomed by everyone, so warming and happy that I started feeling that now I am in my home and with my family. I found different and very informative activities here which increased my knowledge, enhanced my experience and quality of life. I will always be very thankful to all here...'

Shared Space Participant



WHAT NEXT?

At the close of this year-long pilot, participants spent time reflecting upon what they had learned; developing a structure and exploring creative ideas for a future Shared Space company. In the short-term our next steps have been put on pause due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, however our priorities remain:

- to form a decision-making group made up of core participants, who will work intensively with Abukar, Evans and May to design a strategic and creative outline for Shared Space's next steps.
- to fundraise for Shared Space which will enable us to continue to host monthly workshops that remain creatively experimental, accessible and open to all, as well as a series of more focused shorter-term creative projects/
- to maintain Shared Space's public facing activity by continuing to host regular scratch events in order to raise creative profiles; the artistic work being developed by individuals within the immigration system, and to help strengthen the networks of people who make and share their work. The next of these events was planned for Refugee Festival Scotland in June 2020, but for now this has been postponed.

Another key intention of the Shared Space project is to combine its participatory focus, with support for existing and emerging professional artists with direct experience of the asylum system and/or exile. The first step for this will be to continue supporting artist Najma Abukar as she continues to develop her own piece of work in response to Shared Space. With a working title of Artists & Exile and with the support from Tramway, Shared Space hopes to support Najma in bringing this beautiful and resonant photography exhibition to fruition in 2020/21. Alongside bringing Artists and Exile to a public audience, Shared Space is planning to develop a framework for supporting more artists, ones that allow the art and the practice of each artist to determine how that support manifests.

'I learnt to be confident with my communication and how I could speak and others and understand my world.'

Shared Space Participant

SHARED SPACE PRINCIPLES

- We are happy to have you here
- We are very excited, keen and motivated
- We love experimenting so be adventurous
- Everyone here is an artist
- Be yourself
- Trust us
- Provide multilingual support but help us to use and practice our English
- Help me communicate better with you
- Support everyone equally
- Listen
- Don't judge
- Empower thinking
- We are confident but let us take our own steps
- Build confidence
- Open-up imagination and ideas
- Provide travel, creche and food
- Respect us
- Do not patronise us
- Do not hesitate to say your ideas
- Confidentiality is important
- Be polite
- Provide a safe place
- Be committed
- Welcome everyone
- Have Fun
- Be on time
- Be flexible to work with a changing situation
- Be authentic
- Open your heart

ALL IMAGES CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT COURTESY OF
NAJMA ABUKAR



THANK YOU
OUR PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

