

GLORIOUS

Interim Evaluation Report February 2012 Observations from *Glorious* at Wunderbar Festival 2011 by Elizabeth Lynch

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GLORIOUS

Interim Evaluation Report February 2012

I want to explore the sense of not knowing that pervades the UK today – both the fear and the space for hope that has emerged as a result of our increased awareness of climate change and the dramatic impact of the financial collapse. I cannot think of a more appropriate or interesting form for this than the musical – a form that immediately communicates with a vast number of people, including myself, but that is often used to represent some kind of utopia or dystopia. What happens if we inhabit this form with the space of in-betweenness? Can we make a musical that embraces the unknown and the unknowable?

Rajni Shah, November 2009

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Rajni Shah Projects Ltd (RSP) is a Company Limited by Guarantee that delivers political, socially engaged creative projects that are visually striking, highly accessible and open to interpretation by diverse audiences.

Glorious

Glorious is an ambitious project that aims to create rich relationships between Rajni Shah Projects, the presenter (a host venue) and a local community. *Glorious* reaches out to people who would not normally get involved with the arts – often within a community with whom the Presenter is interested in establishing a closer relationship.

Glorious takes place over a number of months. It involves a series of playful interventions in public space followed by a writing and rehearsal process with two sets of local volunteers: a musical group of any genre, who reinterpret the *Glorious* score under the supervision of Musical Director, Suzie Shrubbs; and a group of 6-10 local residents (recruited through the public interventions) who create their own autobiographical monologues during a series of workshops with the company. These become central to the narrative of *Glorious* in that location. A few weeks before the performance date, the whole company starts to come together to create the show. The culminating performance is a unique, shared moment with an audience that will never be repeated, involving stories and a soundtrack created by local people.

A production of *Glorious* aims to deliver a unique high quality musical performance and to leave behind a constructive living heritage in the form of new partnerships and opportunities for both presenters and participants.

RSP follow up each show by sharing documentation, writing and images with all volunteers through their *Glorious* People social network (invite only). They work with writer Mary Paterson to collect stories from all the participants, which will be woven into the *Glorious* Storybook - a copy of which will be sent, along with a DVD of the shows, to each participant at the end of the tour.

Wunderbar Festival, Co-commissioner

As co-commissioner in Newcastle, rather than a presenter, the Wunderbar Festival has been involved with RSP from the project conception stage.

Wunderbar produces dynamic, creative projects that place the audience at the heart of the experience. They bring their work to unusual places and spaces and invite people to take part; often the work only comes alive if people get involved with it. Their projects are led by artists,

but fuelled by unique contributions from those who take part, responding with creativity and playfulness to issues of relevance to real people, real places and real time.

Every two years these projects are celebrated in a festival involving performance, installation, extraordinary happenings, interaction, social events and games. Events take place in both traditional venues – such as theatres, galleries, arts centres, cinemas – and non-traditional performance spaces, such as shopping centres, hairdressers, private homes, city streets. From their home in Newcastle, they present work that takes in the city and the surrounding region with a bold, international outlook.

Independent evaluator, Elizabeth Lynch

My interests and experience lie with arts organisations that explore imaginative approaches to engaging with audiences, young people and communities. I have developed and led organisations that place young people's participation at the heart of their vision, notably at the Roundhouse where I was a Director 2001-8. Recently I have worked with McMc Arts on a large scale performance for Margate beach and produced a UK wide poetry project for Wellcome Trust. I am interested in evaluation as a process of enquiry, reflection and learning that can be used to both open up conversations and be a bridge to future work.

Methodology

This interim report is based on research conducted during the production of *Glorious* in Newcastle in October - November 2011. Subject to further fundraising, more data will be gathered at other locations to produce a formative evaluation report. This will be used to help the company develop their strategy and to offer insight and inspiration to others who wish to produce work that approaches community engagement through working with individual strangers rather than existing or recruited groups.

Participants in Newcastle were invited to reflect on their experiences at three stages of the project - the beginning, mid-way and post-performance - through a series of interviews conducted either face to face or by phone. Conversations were recorded and transcribed. As much as possible, all participants were asked the same or similar questions at each stage. The interviews sought to capture the intrinsic nature of the project, the way it engages all involved, the emotional, intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic impact on individuals and audiences and the social bonding it generates.

The interviewees were: four members of RSP; three from the group of seven student musicians recruited through The Academy of Music and Sound, Gateshead; three of the six local performers recruited through letter-writing activities in Eldon Square shopping centre. In addition, interviews were held with the Creative Director and Coordinator of Wunderbar and ten members of the audience (11%). The evaluator also observed an afternoon session at Eldon Square shopping centre during the letter writing intervention, the dress rehearsal and final performance. An additional workshop observation was contributed by an MA student working on an evaluation of Wunderbar.

A total of 12 people were interviewed two to three times giving a total of 32 interviews. This sample is too small to be able to substantially evidence all the areas of enquiry the company has identified. However it does serve to indicate those aspects which are working well and which could be developed in order to inform future *Glorious* residencies.

The RSP company members interviewed were: Rajni Shah, Director and performer; Suzie Shrubbs, Musical Director; Lucille Acevedo-Jones, Designer; Sheila Ghelani, workshop facilitator.

PART ONE: GATHERING

I visit Eldon Square on 13th October to interview some of the artists, musicians, Wunderbar team and members of the public. A few days later, 20-24 October, I interview, by telephone, more performers whose involvement has been confirmed during the early workshop process.

1. Letters

Eldon Square indoor shopping mall 11-14 October 2011. At entrances to the shopping centre, the NE1 Street Rangers hand out flowers with small notes to the public and tell them to look out for the Glorious living room. Passers-by are attracted by the incongruous, cosy-looking sitting room furniture set up on the first floor, in a public area close to escalators. A simple sign invites anyone to 'write a letter to a stranger'. Over two hours on the Thursday afternoon I observe a steady trickle of people stopping to enquire, to chat and sometimes to sit and take tea with Rajni, Sheila or Lucille. Even in that short space of time I see letter writers of all ages, male and female, with varied social and cultural backgrounds. A trio of young men set about writing with an unselfconscious focus at the table attractively stocked with coloured stationery and pens. A broad bowl on the coffee table receives and offers a tantalising array of sealed envelopes.

Writers place their completed letters in the bowl and then choose and keep a letter from someone else. Company members do not read the letters but are focused on meeting and interacting with each participant, and inviting them to continue working with the company if they wish.

I believe in Destiny and like the game of chance element in the letter writing.
Where will my message go and what will I get? Ali

**I wrote a letter, I got wrapped up in it. I loved it! To get one and to do one.
I loved receiving the letter. Stephen**

I sat down and had a good chat with Lucille and Rajni, They were really nice. I thought it was interesting, different, and I was curious to see what I'd receive in return. Paul

I enjoyed receiving my letter, it had a list of things about the person, it's good way to meet and connect with people. The letter writing let me be reflective. Katie

I have been through a lot of things in life but I'm still up and kicking and going out there and that's a wonderful thing to pass on to people whether you know them or not. Pauline

Rajni talks about the experience of being in the indoor shopping centre for four long consecutive days (8am-8pm) rather than shorter days over a longer period. Contrary to expectations, this short but continuous presence allows people to come back to chat and tell others to come.

In Newcastle, people have been so engaged with the idea of the letters and have got so much out of them, you can really see a transformation happening when someone takes part, in the process of writing and then receiving a letter. That's a reminder to me about why it is worth all the graft to make this happen. People are really excited about it, the letters, and that there's more to it, that we are around for a bit. They can come and see the show. They feel that it's important and that it makes a difference. They want us to stay. They have ideas of other places we could do it.



Sheila is surprised and delighted to experience how open people are in Newcastle,

I wasn't looking forward to a week in shopping centre...but it's been lovely.

Rajni relates a quite extraordinary story :

There was a Dutch man who took part in the letter-writing, and absolutely loved it. He was visiting Newcastle and said he was going to set up a similar project (inspired by ours) when he returned to Holland. We really enjoyed meeting him. Later that day, he came back - we weren't sure why. "You'll never believe this," he said. It turned out that the letter he had received had included a description of the letter-writer and his profession. The Dutch man had been in Tesco when he had spotted a man fitting exactly the description - so he had introduced himself and was right - it was that very person! So two of our strangers actually met! And they started talking about how the Geordie had never left the area, and might get a passport so that he could go and visit his new Dutch friend...

Ilana Mitchell from Wunderbar considers the first audience for the work is the people who get involved in the shopping centre. The next audience is the people who come and see the performance and the third is the discussion that happens around the work more publicly - not necessarily in that order.

This intervention has already got some lovely press and is something that is created locally.

For RSP and Wunderbar the letter-writing intervention is a discreet activity, complete in itself, similar to models that Rajni has successfully deployed in previous work. She describes this work as 'exploring the use of gift as an opening to conversation with strangers'.



2. Attraction

After the initial attraction of the letter writing, potential performers are invited to attend a workshop and/or further meetings with Rajni and Sheila before they decide whether to continue. The final cast of six emerges from this process rather than being 'selected'. The extended casting process enables exploration of the ideas and themes for *Glorious*, discussion of the working process and a chance to establish logistics and commitments, including any access needs. By recruiting a local cast in this way, RSP can target and filter people who may not be part of a community group, who are not involved in the arts and who wouldn't necessarily respond to a call for participants.

Glorious. I instantly took (this word) to myself and realised that we actually don't say 'I'm Glorious.' 'I am glorious' is a wonderful phrase to use and even if you don't feel glorious when you started off, you actually feel quite glorious when you have finished.

It's the creative side, that's it. That's what's brought me.

The student musicians attend a meeting in September 2011 with Rajni and Suzie at the suggestion of their tutor at The Academy of Music and Sound, Gateshead. They listen to a recording of the songs and hear more about how they might work on *Glorious*, contributing their own ideas for interpretation and performance. The seven who decide to be involved are attracted by how they will be involved creatively and by the themes of the show. Some of them also take part in the letter writing.

What grabbed me was the word Rajni used, 'transition', changing times etc. that intrigued me.

It was different, it lets you do your own thing, rather than following the pattern of normal production - not just sight-reading - interpreting in different ways.

Like the participants, the company members are asked about why they were attracted to *Glorious* in the first place and what they consider to be the most striking aspects of the project. Musical Director Suzie Shrubbs wanted to be involved precisely for the project's open and unpredictable qualities.

When I saw the job advertised, one of the first things that excited me was 'RSP makes risk taking work - we're looking for someone who can cope with the unexpected in a live performance'. This is exactly the work I want to do, I love the fact you don't know what's going to happen.

The people, their stories and the process are a primary interest. Suzie likes the interplay between the individual monologues and the music and describes the company members as a 2D 'flat pack kit' which the local participants assemble into 3D.

Experienced facilitator and artist Sheila Ghelani always enjoys seeing 'the buzz' that someone gets who has never performed before.

It's exciting to enable people who haven't had the chance to explore certain ideas or aspects of themselves become empowered to do that on stage. That is quite phenomenal.

Lucille Acevedo-Jones, the designer, comments on the unusual positioning of the work in the sector - not quite live-art piece but a theatrical work that draws on an established tradition of music theatre which audiences may find striking in the context of other work of this kind. Lucille worked

closely with Rajni during the initial devising and writing period. The process of finding the right imagery for the costume and set had been experimental and organic, influenced by the lyrics and music. She hopes that in the same way the audience will come away with a sense of the words that triggered her images as well as new words of their own.

For the Director of the Wunderbar Festival what is really interesting about the project is 'the balance between creating a very high end product that's been really well crafted, and then how it involves people in a really ad hoc, instantaneous way to fit in with that.' How do the ingredients balance, work together? Where are the tensions and the cracks?

3. Expectations

Foremost for the musicians is the opportunity to learn from taking part in a production that invites them to contribute creatively. The offer to the students was clear and well understood from the outset, although Rajni's and Suzie's expectations are surpassed as the project progresses. One of the students is a mature and experienced performer, who brings a wealth of understanding to the process, which for him is the most important aspect of the project.

The process more than the end product, more process than final show.

The performers are not sure what to expect from *Glorious*. They are all uncertain about the journey they are taking towards the performance, but are confident in RSP, engaged and curious.

Overall the project is still a bit of a mystery. I have written in the past and am interested in writing and asking questions about life. Rajni and people seemed curious people themselves, interesting people.

I enjoyed the reflective aspect of the workshop exercises.

Having worked on a pilot in Nottingham and a premiere of *Glorious* at the Barbican in London, the artists are also curious about how their framework will be brought to life in Newcastle. At the start of the process they share many 'unknowns' with the cast, although their perspectives are informed by their knowledge and experience of the show. The artists are curious, open-minded and confident. This calm confidence influences the participants and their approach to the project.

RSP have worked in Newcastle before and Rajni comments, mid -October, that here she feels 'a celebratory air, a real sense of excitement' about the show. The musicians are bringing a lot of fresh ideas to the music. The very sociable experience of working in the shopping centre over an intense period has generated more interest in the final show than in previous places.

4. Discovery

Interviewees describe wanting to explore more about themselves in general and about their own creativity specifically. They see an opportunity to push their own boundaries, e.g. through improvising music, performing for a live audience or having the opportunity to articulate narratives about their own lives as part of their personal development.

A couple of people have been thinking about more spiritual matters, for example:

At the moment I am asking lots of questions about God, Life and the Universe and a wee bit of me thinks I might find out more about that. Maybe Rajni is searching as well – I don't know, I haven't had that conversation with her.

5. Place

Several interview questions attempt to explore a sense of place specific to Newcastle, but these don't yield responses, qualities or information that could be attributed to this city alone. The local performers and musicians are asked to talk about three important aspects of living in Newcastle. Their replies fall neatly into three, very positive, categories:

- the people - their friendliness and openness to strangers
- the city - its historic buildings, its facilities, cultural life and beautiful surrounding countryside
- a significant personal connection with the city, whether it is their home by birth or by choice

Of the six local participants interviewed, only one had been born and raised locally. Four had chosen Newcastle as their home, one student only lived there during term-time.

Research in further locations will help determine whether each production is informed by the location to any significant degree.

6. Challenges

Having made the commitment and discussed their personal circumstances with Rajni and Sheila, the chief concerns for participants are about achieving all that needs to be done creatively within the tight timescale, the challenge of the music itself, and being open to the creative process.

The hardest part is trying to interpret it differently, not play it as it written, trying not to follow the pattern, trying to create something new.

Not worrying about getting up onstage, being myself, trusting that I have something to say and that Rajni will put that in some sort of context, pull it together into a credible musical.

Rajni is delighted that the musicians have completely taken on board reimagining the songs, making them their own. At this stage she hopes that she will do justice to their work by successfully integrating them into the *Glorious* framework. The performers are available for different lengths of time, often Rajni and Sheila are working with them on a one to one basis, rather than as a group, so piecing it together feels like a challenge. Sheila describes the delicate process of getting the performers hooked, and then once hooked, how to elicit interesting material without pushing.

Despite the calm confidence that infuses the whole team, the company appears to be making a huge leap of faith. There are inherent risks in a process that deliberately engages with people who have other priorities and slender resources. Rajni and Sheila are thinking and creating on their feet, being responsive to the participants' needs and responsible for ensuring that the collective effort delivers on its promises for all who have invested in its creation.

Our shows, even though they involve a lot of improvisation, are very, very tight. So it's an interesting experiment. There's a real kind of fragility about the show and that is something that really defines it. We can allow ourselves to be completely responsive to the people we meet and to change and shift within the tight structure we have created - knowing that at any point our performers may or may not show up. We've designed *Glorious* with a structure that can hold this fragility, so that we can work with anyone who wants to work with us, whatever their schedule - but the fragility is definitely also one of its defining qualities.

7. Creativity

Expectations around personal creativity vary according to the participant's experiences. Some are learning a lot about working collaboratively and about generating material from their own histories. This can be revelatory:

Normally throughout productions I'm following the bass player, trying to lock in with him. But this is a lot more about trying to fit around the music and cue people...very different to what I am used to, no sort of definite structure, it's all improvised. It's awesome, it really is.

It's more about giving my experience and bringing it to the table, sharing. Musically - just let it happen. It is challenging in the sense that we are re-arranging original music, that in itself is a challenge and working with the other musicians, to contribute a different energy to it.

For the artists also, personal creative development varies depending on their role in the project and the nature of their contribution. For musician Suzie Shrubbs, the whole experience of working on *Glorious* has made the building of relationships with people more central to the way she works. She feels it has broadened her practice.

It's helped me to feel confident about letting people (my students for example) be the way they are. *Glorious* is very freeing. 'Let something be what it is' Steve (Newcastle musician) said, 'every sound has a meaning'.

The designer's creative development was charged during the initial process of conceiving the work. Lucille faced conceptual and practical challenges, such as working with new materials. During the process in each location, her challenge is always to deal with the personalities of the individuals in order to facilitate being themselves on stage, comfortable, confident and looking good. This challenge is echoed by Sheila who needs to work out how to bring out the best in participants:

That's the bit I can develop and learn from, and will always learn from.

Having made many changes and refinements after the *Glorious* preview and premiere, Rajni feels that here in Newcastle it is as if they have a show to work with for the first time. This presents an exciting challenge as a director and as a performer.

We can play around and do what we set out to do - we can really tailor the show to the place. The performance space is also good here...In future, ideally, we can take this model and adapt it to each place so that it really is a unique celebration for that location and a reflection of the people who live there.

For Wunderbar Festival, the Director feels there is much learning for them in the *Glorious* project. RSP's experiment is a bit like the Festival's experiment, which asks 'How do we make projects with people outside of arts communities?'



PART TWO: EXPLORING

During the workshop and rehearsal period 24 October - 1 November, I interview artists, performers and musicians over the phone or face to face, prior to the dress rehearsal.

1. Discovery

A couple of the musicians describe being stretched by the project. A teenage musician, a student, is delighted by the opportunity to improvise:

The amount of lenience...the whole improvisation side has been a real shock to me. It's quite strange to be allowed to do that. It's taught me so many things, how to improvise on the spot, things you wouldn't normally do, you just try them out and it works.

With the music, we have never had the chance (before this) to do whatever we want with the music, it's great. It helps us to progress and work as a team and respect each other.

As much as they are surprised by the openness of the music-making process, Suzie is delighted to discover how creative the musicians are and what they are achieving.

I don't have prior expectations. I never have any expectations going in. Here in Newcastle I've been able to work with the group dynamic from the word go.

This sentiment is echoed by Sheila and supports the open and the opening up approach to making *Glorious* which comes through from talking to all those interviewed.

For the performers, it is receiving an unexpected appreciation for the texts they are writing:

The piece of text Rajni and Sheila chose for the show, a letter to someone....I thought it was slight but they were raving about it....I think that they saw something (in it) that people could relate to - funny, natural.

Rajni has been surprised and pleased by the number of people who came to the intervention in Eldon Square. This has been the most successful to date. In terms of identifying performers, the pattern is similar to that in Nottingham and London, quite erratic and last minute. The project schedule is constantly revised and updated. The process of talking, transcribing, encouraging writing and reviewing this with participants is in constant flux, affected by practical problems such as someone being unable to take the train to rehearsal because they had no cash for the fare. Rajni had to go and collect them.

You just have to be prepared to constantly let go of what you thought might happen. It works really well if you can just stay 'present' all the time. Working as a team is really important ... so that we can then give enough to the performers and musicians and make their experience very rich ... Instead of just focusing on the show at this stage, we have to keep our focus quite wide. The real trick of it is maintaining a calm about it because it's really important that we're not worried about it, to trust that we feel it will be okay.

The process of discovery can involve a high degree of risk, and as mentioned earlier this inherent quality attracted Suzie from the outset.

This kind of work allows you to be a human being. I love the fact that, even though I have my toolkit of activities and you do plan ... you don't know what's going to happen until you start working with people. You mostly have to think on your feet. You have to be prepared for the unexpected. I like what composer R. Murray Schafer says- 'You should teach on the verge of peril'.

2. Trust

The participants and musicians trust the artists. Maybe that is not surprising: they know that RSP have done this before; the Wunderbar Festival has a profile with some of them which offers a public context and platform; Rajni and the company create a working environment which is nurturing and generates confidence and a sense of purpose.

How do the artists manage the tension between being prepared to completely let go and the need to produce a high quality piece of work at the end? Rajni acknowledges the huge risk she is taking. She has built responsiveness and flux into the working process and constantly assesses and questions what might/could happen.

For me the biggest thing about *Glorious* is this idea of the very personal and strongly held political being brought together with my work. It feels like a defining project for me. It's the first time I have felt that my work has an absolute sense of social integrity. The way we have built the project, it means that you can do things like go and pick someone up from another town who is feeling quite vulnerable and talk to them. We also gave ourselves permission to work quite in depth with people who really wouldn't do this kind of thing normally. There's a lot of trust in other people, not just in our team but outside of it as well. And we're actually living that, not just thinking, what would it be like if we took a leap of faith? And then living that in a professional setting.

3. Communication

We are all different, we try to make a conversation with each other. Through music we can tell others how we feel.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the participants best express their emotions and feelings through playing music or writing. A couple expressed a high self-awareness of the way they communicated their feelings and opinions on a daily basis to those around them, both verbally and through their body language.

This is a challenge because it's about me. It's a very personal piece of writing. I am ready. I accept the things that have happened to me ... but ask whether it's OK to share these bits or those bits. That's what it is for me, this performance, a challenge, (which is) definitely right for me. I'm feeling very here and now with it. I'm up for taking risks.

I'm OK communicating face to face when I'm well, I'm prone to depression and can be up and down - so when I'm like that, I prefer writing.

Three participants comment on the value of working with the company on techniques for feeling more comfortable on stage.



I have never thought about making a relationship with a stage or an audience - entering and leaving the stage, how to walk, smile, respond, listen to someone.

Being aware of the use of the microphone and slowing down. When you are expressing something personal you don't want to ham it up. With Rajni, we explored use of eye contact.

Lucille brings a level of personal attention to the musicians and performers who each have one to one consultations with her about what they would like to wear, exploring links between a favourite outfit and a favourite colour. Memories attached to clothes are discussed, any minor repairs and alterations made, any accessories needed either found or created. She is conscious of giving what is required, of not being intrusive. Some people require more support than others. Her role is to help them look the way they want to look. Through conversations that start early on in the process she also reinforces the ideas that she thinks fit the overall look of the show. Knowing what you are going to wear supports feeling confident on stage and she says the cast are grateful not to have to worry about it.

4. Strangers

The performers are strangers, how can I talk to them? They are all different, new people. You have to think how to make a relationship or a friendship with them, negotiate, feel your way.

Half way through the process, the reflections on working with a group of strangers indicate a mixture of openness and reticence, confidence and shyness. The group is diverse in every way and it is clear that the company works hard to make everyone feel welcome, comfortable, and able to move at their own pace. People appreciate that although the stakes are high, they are not being pressurised. There is a sense that the process is as important as the final production and they are enjoying getting to know each other through writing, talking and listening. There is also a sense that the work is serious and purposeful.

They (RSP) are very patient, kind and encouraging and they're very gentle with their direction. They also seem quite at peace with themselves. They seem happy and positive and optimistic and that helps.

I like it, I like to see what they bring to the table, how they do things. I am always open to that. They are strangers but they're sort of - in my world - aspects of me that I haven't met yet, or aspire to or want to run away from...

5. Glorious?

The interviewees describe the projects as 'glorious' for the following reasons:

- The opportunity to create and to share a performance that will entertain and move their audience
- The freedom of the creative process
- The manner in which the project is hosted and facilitated

The freedom of creativity is what *Glorious* is for me, it's the process, it's the 'before the performance'. It's creating something, feeling responsible for it, nurturing it, nurturing it together, changing things, having feedback, being ourselves and sharing that with an audience.

How nice and calm and chilled everyone is. I have worked on plays where after two weeks everyone hates each other!

For Suzie, the project is glorious because it gives people a space to be themselves - and from this space they project something about their humanity that they own and can be proud of. Lucille talks about the way hope is central to the whole creative process and this thread then runs right through the show. From previous feedback, she says, the hope is also palpable for the audience.

In Newcastle, what is particularly glorious for Rajni is the way the musicians have transformed the songs. They make her smile, which is quite a challenge, as the original versions are quite slow and melancholic.

As the show emerges in Newcastle, it is expressing a kind of sadness and regret, but also a real openness and celebration is coming through, which is beautiful. It evokes different feelings at once, lovely and heartwarming ... but also an awareness of the fragility of life.

Whilst the show is a celebration, it builds in an awareness that life is about goodbye as well.

6. Challenges

For the company there is some learning about timescale and the number of people needed to deliver the project effectively. Whilst the timescale for working with the musicians has worked well, for the performers it has been extremely tight. Sheila wasn't available for a week and Rajni realises that the process of workshop and conversation works much better if she is co-leading. Working with a partner in this situation leaves Rajni 'free to look out for different things and have more of a wider view'.

Reflecting on the 'casting' process and the large numbers engaging with the letter writing intervention, Rajni feels that they should have invited everyone to the workshops and not exercised some caution, in their anticipation of being overwhelmed, as the week progressed. Although they did tell a great many people about the next steps and gave out information cards, the company feels that, interestingly, it doesn't make that much difference. When things shake down, despite the amount of people met, it's only a handful who really feel that getting involved more intimately is right for them, and who follow up.

In one sense, RSP are casting the show, but the discreet selection process seems like a collaborative task with the strangers they meet. If someone wants to be involved, a place will be found for them. They look for people who haven't performed. They don't tap into any existing community groups or organisations. Through the letter writing intervention, workshops, conversations - somehow the company filter the people they want to prioritise to have the experience. It is a subtle approach and not an exact science. To target individuals explicitly in publicity and other communications would be intrusive. However, decisions about where the interventions are delivered can help to determine the kind of people who do take part. RSP hopes to find six quite different individuals, a mix of people.

It's about the conversations, people who have the time and inclination to stop and talk -

they have time for a reason, they want a conversation, maybe they are not working, or they are drawn to the content. There is a kind of organic logic at work in the approach.

A closer observation and logging of the intervention and workshop process in several locations could yield some fascinating data and analysis about the process of casting strangers in *Glorious*. This would require resources beyond the scope of this evaluation research but the learning might be useful for others exploring behaviour, community engagement and creative expression.

When working on creative participation and learning projects, the challenges the people involved face in their daily lives are always part and parcel of what the artists need to acknowledge and to respond to with sensitivity, empathy and pragmatism. Working with unpredictability is familiar territory for many practitioners. However, in most of these projects and interventions, a set of allies and education or community partners are involved who can take responsibility for or share the pastoral support of the participants, especially those who face barriers to being involved in the arts. By working with strangers, RSP is taking on direct responsibility for their relationship with individuals who perform in *Glorious*. That is why the casting process is a careful one. Expectations, the commitment and the boundaries need to be established, to be managed and to evolve. RSP commits to maintaining communication across the growing *Glorious* community via a (private) social networking site, beyond each residency and performance. It will be interesting to see how this initiative develops over 2012/13 as more *Glorious* productions take place.

7. Place

Music is completely abstract and exists in music, not anywhere else.

Suzie talked about the musicians bringing the wealth of expressing who they are through the music and how this can shape the decisions they make creatively. A sense of the location of Newcastle having a particular impact on their approach to the music could not be evidenced during this residency.

Rajni's creative focus is different and she has had an opportunity to work more specifically with the performers to explore how they experience the place, the city where they live. They like Newcastle, like talking about it and want to be involved in something that is about the city that most of them live in by choice or circumstance rather than by birth. An exercise which asked people to map their route from home into the city centre generated a shared conversation about spaces and landmarks. Other exercises explored how people relate to a place and what that means to them.

The sense of the identity of a place, it's quite hard to articulate – there's a real down to earthness, (clichés come into being for a reason!) – there's a dark edge I would say, a kind of poetry. The people are quite poetic and there's a beautiful mix of voices and accents in this show.

Sheila also feels that whilst the process has explored how space and place resonate for individuals, this is an aspect of the mapping of people's experiences in time as well as place. Consideration of the theatre space, where the performers, musicians, artists and audience will all gather to share what has been created in partnership and collaboration, is of course a tangible and new focus for everyone - a container for all those experiences to come together for a night.



Voice

6 this act to-night as the hills are fold-ed in

12 co-loured lights are tad - ing and our thoughts are packed a-way It is

17 ous It is glo - ri - ous at we move to-wards a pause as the ci - ty scape

23 Just be-fore you leave your your feel the weight of his-to-ry It is

28 ous It is glo - ri - ous As the fu-ture looms a-gain As the past re-turs a-rou

34 place re-mem-bers us and we look to where we are It is glo - ri - ous

40 Here's to all the peo-ple here Here's to those who can't be here

44 us right here right now It's for us right here right now

49 -ous It is glo - ri - ous It is glo - ri - ous

55 glo - ri - ous It is glo - ri - ous It is glo - ri - ous

ous

Handwritten Annotations:

- Red scribbles and circles around measures 6-12.
- Orange scribbles around measures 17-23.
- Blue scribbles and circles around measures 28-34.
- Large blue scribbles and circles around measures 40-44.
- Large blue scribbles and circles around measures 49-55.
- Handwritten numbers: 2, 3, 1, 2, 3.
- Handwritten words: "funk", "Catal", "A major instrum", "STAR", "ACCAPPELLA", "BIG E F D".
- Handwritten symbols: "X", "L", "T", "N", "E", "D".
- Handwritten chords: A, D, E, B/D#, Dmaj7, A/E, D/A, E/G#, F, B, C, G.

PART THREE: SHARING

I attend the dress rehearsal and performance of *Glorious* on 1 November 2011. It is the first time I have seen the production. This section is based on interviews and conversations with all the participants after the performance, during the weeks that followed, 7 November - 9 December, when they had taken time to reflect on their experience.

1. Audience

They felt energised. It had a profound impact. It was powerful, cosmic. The show connected with them, they enjoyed it, were knocked sideways, definitely moved by it, they had emotional responses. Nothing negative was said about it, which is quite unusual.

The audience gather in the foyer and then Rajni and the company come to join us, to welcome us to the show and lead us into the theatre. The house is almost full, 88 people in all. This is the first time Rajni has greeted the audience as part of *Glorious* and she does this to add to the sense of the performers and audience all doing something together. In Newcastle, she feels the coming together during *Glorious* has been experienced more strongly than in previous locations.

It's about a lot of different types of people coming together, people who we have met in the shopping centre as well as the performers, musicians and their friends and family...What makes it different is that a lot of people in the audience have some kind of relationship to the journey we have been on. Others may have come because they read about it. There's a real mix in the space.

In terms of preparing the musicians and artists for the performance, there is no formal pre-show preparation, no big group 'psyching-up' for the event, just a quiet moment of coming together and sharing one exercise before walking into the foyer together.

We just walk on and do it. It helped walking out and coming in with the audience, it gave us a connection to them. Behind the drum-kit I was in the zone ready to play.

The performance is absorbing, surprising in form and content, entertaining, with a visual and performance aesthetic that brings simplicity, a sense of control and clarity to frame the personal monologues performed by their authors, and the ideas and emotions expressed through the songs and music.

Afterwards, ten members of the audience (five female, five male, various ages 20-50) are asked how the ideas in the show resonated or struck a chord with them and how it made them feel 'glorious'. Their responses are grouped here into four areas: form and staging of the production, content and ideas, feelings evoked, reflections.

Two comment on how the technical and visual set-up was part of the performance and how this broke down the barriers between audience, performer, production team. For one woman the foyer introduction had raised the expectation in her that the audience was going to have a more participatory role and notes how much the performers are mostly static throughout. Others comment on liking the poetry of the lyrics, the music, Rajni's voice, the monologues. One struggles to find coherence between the different aspects of the show, two are intrigued or baffled by the use of repetition:

A monologue started and the next time they appeared and repeated the lines.... you seemed

to get to know them more and you listen more to each line. You tried to put a story, tried to figure out what they were talking about and where they had come from, like returning to a page in a book, 'Now what was all that about then?'

Two people appreciate the 'odd, strange' mix of personal narratives and the theatricality of the singer, her dress and the music.

Six people talk about the ideas that resonated with them, both in general and specifically. These relate to friendship and time, loss, and appreciating the detail of our lives. Two mention the symbolism of the singer's dress:

Right at start she was like earth mother, then afterwards the base becomes the knottiness, the detritus of human life.

The concept of the dress, was it a tree, was it hinting at the industrial heritage of Newcastle? There were layers and growth. I would have liked more signposting.

Eight people describe feeling moved emotionally by the performance. This ranges from feeling involved, 'that the audience felt part of something together', being moved by the honesty and poignancy of the personal experiences recounted in the monologues, to feeling 'embraced' by the music. There is reflection provoked by the ideas in the show, about what we wish and hope for, communicating with people away from us and some personal questions:

Why do I fly around like an idiot in day-to-day life and why can't I just calm down and be calm and peaceful like I have been tonight?

Would I want to be that person up on the stage opening myself up, giving that personal narrative, would I want to do that and look at myself in that way?

In terms of the word 'glorious', people comment on feeling at one with everyone in the room, the warm, welcoming atmosphere, the flowers given out at the end, empathy for the performers and their stories. For others, the word 'glorious' did not resonate with their experience:

The title of the play or experience didn't fulfill that. Glorious is such a beautiful word. She has a exquisite voice and an exquisite presence ... there's beauty in the voice and every day experiences, but glorious means so much more for me than that.

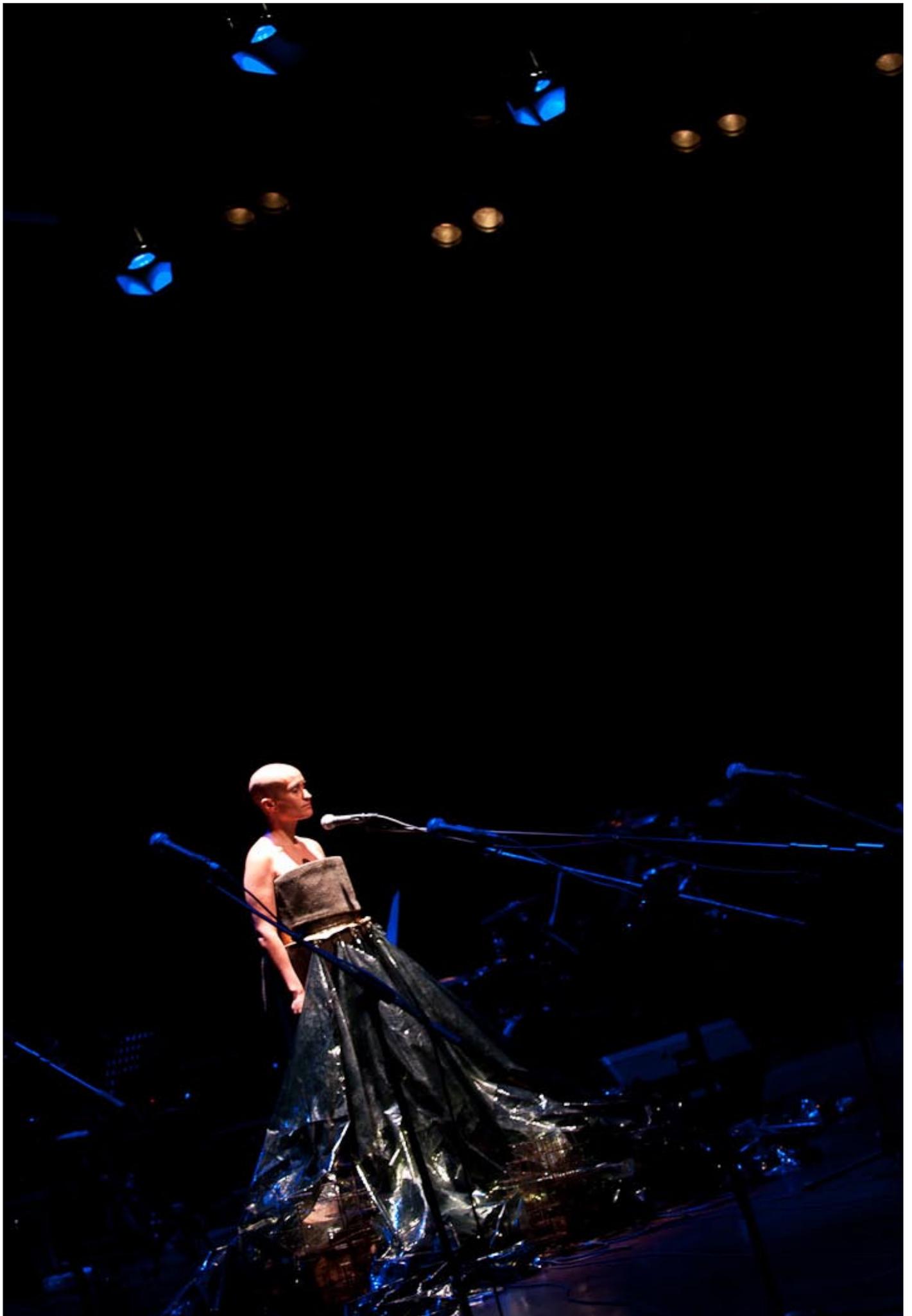
Glorious is not the word - peaceful, calm, thoughtful.

I felt it was a bit evangelical; I was a bit uncomfortable with that.

I think I saw something very special tonight.

I talk afterwards with Rajni about how the show is challenging the usual definitions of the word 'glorious':

In many ways, I think the show is trying to redefine what the word 'glorious' might mean - it's making a stand for a quieter, more profound and perhaps more internal state than the word usually implies.



2. Creativity

When asked about the impact of the project on their creativity, the responses from the participants covered technical, expressive or attitudinal changes. Existing experience of creating and performing helped some feel less nervous about the project. Technical instrumental progress was mentioned, increased confidence in their creativity and in how they value it.

I value my creativity more. I've asked myself if I am creative, in ways I wasn't before. Being part of a musical is completely new ... in the past I've only written fiction, a certain type of fiction and am now more open to broadening that out.

As a writer, I found the use of repetition very interesting as I already use it a lot as a technique and would like to develop this.

It has made me more open to expressing emotions in my work, although I've tried to do so in a quite wry, brutally simplistic way. Usually... I would give away nothing personal and view doing so as self indulgent.

3. Ideas

There was a sense of 'human-ness' about it. We were all in it together wherever we came from.

The musicians and performers were asked if the project had made them think about any particular issues or ideas and if it had raised any questions for them. The responses were sparse from most of the musicians/performers, 'no, not really', or 'it's all new to me, I'm not keen on having questions'. One person referred again to her new and confident activism for local residents. Two described responses directly related to the content of the show.

I think differently about the way we communicate as human beings. Like finding friends, empowering, you're not on you own. I like sharing my perceptions of the world with Rajni. The lasting legacy (for me) is empowerment, a strengthening of my world view.

I want to look through the script again, I want to look at Rajni's words again because a lot of them affected me... I want to think about some of things she said and what they might mean to me. For example, part of her words were about letting go of stuff, objects and people, and I wasn't sure exactly what she was saying but it stirred something in me. I want to reflect on it and perhaps give Rajni a shout.

For another couple of people, it helped them make creative or personal connections:

The ideas about things falling apart, losing things that are precious and still honouring them - the lyrics are fierce and gentle at the same time ... Interesting to contrast with some hip hop, the same vibe of themes - change, losing things, letting go - but the same message is delivered in a more gentle way and this is more powerful, people take it in more if it is less scary.

No questions, just answers. Mainly: when you love someone it 'never really goes away',

which admittedly I wrote, but not until I worked my issues out on the writing exercises.

How do the ideas and themes resonate? Harmoniously. The fact that it was touching upon the uncertain future vibe... it was nebulous not precise. It tapped into zeitgeist of the way I am feeling or experiencing the world at the moment.

One young musician speaks about Rajni's costume as a symbol of life and letting go of it; how it was built up during the show from a simple beginning to something complex and multi-layered.

Then at the end, Rajni stepped out of it wearing something very simple. She just let it go. The costume is like how we grow up in life, like a tree, it grows, maybe Rajni was the root of that tree. I was really glad I was in it. Thanks to everyone, you did a great job.

4. Reflection

In contrast to the prompt about ideas and questions, when I ask about what they would take forward or carry with them from this experience, the responses from everyone are varied and detailed. Several mention the enjoyment of working hard and well with such a diverse group of people, united in their goal; the creative challenges; working with the participants and the company in an atmosphere of mutual respect; increased confidence in their creative ability and sense of purpose for their immediate ambitions for studying/writing/performing.

There were some interesting personal responses, which connect to RSP's aims for the project's legacy for individuals.

We received comments on a postcard, personal feedback, positive things, it was a very nice thing to get, to hold the memory of it. A gift.

The reflections indicate that Rajni's and the other company members' approach to generating material is appreciated for its authentic spirit of collaboration and enquiry.

Standing and saying something that was a private part of me - I didn't feel she had a prescribed agenda, anything we wrote would be considered, something we were comfortable with.

(EL: What do you think Rajni was trying to create?)

A process - you trust Rajni and Sheila but you're not always sure where they're going. My understanding was that what it meant for you was important. What Rajni wanted was what she received.

Their words below validate some of the aims for *Glorious* articulated by Rajni, Suzie, Sheila and Lucille and the feelings and spirit they hope the show will evoke in participants and audiences.

Getting real people's feelings, portraying where people are and reassuring them that it's OK to be there. It's not depressing, it could have been but there's enough joy, poignant moments, the audience would go away having something to think about and be enlivened by it.

It's about life, being together, real, saying where you are - is glorious.

The general joy, the fun, the laughter, the friends, the being made to feel special and seeing that for the other performers as well, and the connection. Connection with the audience, definitely.

I was surprised this stuff went in - my writing, the fact that there wasn't a lot of humour didn't matter, it could work without any humour.

As a person seeing people put together a project on such short notice with such tranquility and good feeling has inspired me to be calmer in my personal life. Also being open to things: it came about through a chance meeting and I'm very glad it did.

5. Community

When asked about any impact on their perceptions of community, the younger interviewees describe experiencing some change as a result of the project. For one, this is a change in attitudes to older people and people not like themselves. Others mention now knowing people outside student circles, having some prejudices challenged and confounded and developing their capacity for teamwork.

I'm a lot more open minded... The people arriving for *Glorious* weren't what I had in mind. I wouldn't have put them in the show. I had preconceptions, I judged them and I was wrong.

One mature participant talks about feeling more confident about organising community action with her local residents, which she attributes to her *Glorious* experience. Another mentions enjoying meeting people from a theatrical background for the first time, having not had the opportunity before.

In terms of the *Glorious* community, there are cautious responses about using the Ning social network site to keep in touch with RSP. This is not about a lack of interest, more to do with access, convenience, time and having a reason/motivation to communicate. The use of the Ning site will be reviewed and assessed as the project develops. Next time Rajni would like to build in hands-on sessions for people on how to use the website and how/what kind of after-show relationship and support might be developed. It may be interesting to compare its use with other ways of communication that are also being used between individuals, e.g. meetings, letters, phone calls, text, email and Facebook.

I'll be staying connected to Rajni and keeping ongoing relationship with the *Glorious* crew.... Regardless of how keen she is on it, I'll be pestering her and the crew for advice. They are allies and creative friends, there's a connection there that is permanent.

6. Collaboration

Creative collaboration is taking place on several levels and across different timescales - between members of the RSP company, with co-producer and presenter Wunderbar Festival (specifically the Director); between RSP and the musicians and between RSP and the performers. Managing, producing and delivering the process is dependent on careful planning and understanding the nature of the lines of collaboration. Some of the artistic team have been collaborating creatively for years, others are familiar with the company's work but are participating in *Glorious* for the first time. They share a commitment to the project's approach to engagement, an openness to

whatever the individual musicians and performers bring to the process. In Newcastle, the company appreciated the time they had there to set up relationships between the musicians and performers during workshops prior to rehearsals. This helped to build the sense of company that was experienced on stage and communicated to some of the audience who gave feedback.

The relationship with the musicians and the speakers is very specific, described by Rajni as a micro-collaboration. The collaboration occurs within defined parameters and she thinks that this helps people to decide to take part. The roles within the collaboration are clear and their contribution is defined.

They can speak in their own voice but trust us to deliver a professional show. There is a level of friendship there too. It's not really a collaboration, it's not co-production, their role is as performers... It's about saying something in your own voice as part of a piece of work whose themes resonate with you.

Rajni talks about people being drawn to *Glorious* because of the themes that resonate with them, which are about 'this moment right now, change and in-between-ness, and about listening to people's voices'.

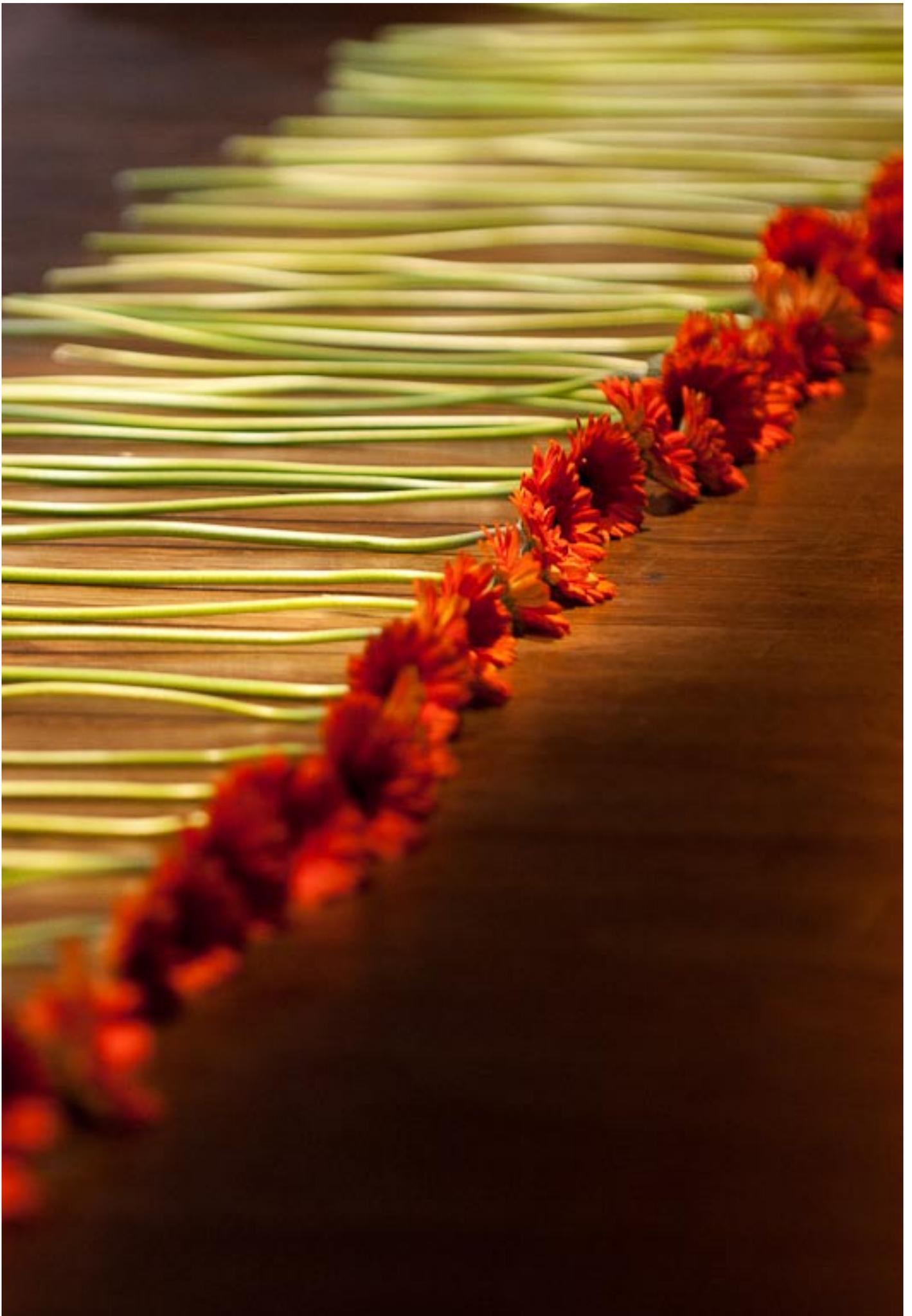
Listening to the performers and to the artists and Wunderbar, the importance of mutual trust is mentioned regularly. Everyone is bearing some risk. The performers may feel that it is an important moment to have the experience of standing on stage and speaking in their own voice, but it also feels like a bold step, a brave step. RSP and Wunderbar, despite their careful framing of the project, must have faith that these individuals will have, or will find, the personal resources to come through the whole process. It is not unexpected or unsurprising that some people decide to drop out during workshops or rehearsals, for whatever reason. In Newcastle this did happen, even up to the day before the performance.

We ask them to step into the unknown. There is risk but because we have built a framework, this helps us manage the risk.

For Suzie, working with the musicians is different and feels more like co-production. There is a format, a structure, which gives space for the contribution of the musicians to exist. They have to rearrange and rewrite the material and make it their own, which she says is a real test of the skills of the musician. Classically trained musicians can find this way of working quite challenging. Rajni is pleased that new ground has been broken in Newcastle. The musicians took greater control and said that they didn't want all the songs to be sad. This experience has opened up new possibilities for the company. What might be possible in other cities? Could we set up a *Glorious* community choir for anyone to join?

The power and evocation of the simple, celebratory act of singing together, which includes all of the *Glorious* team – even the producer who is busy on her phone but stops to join in – helps evoke the sense of equality which appears to exist between all of the individuals involved in bringing this version of *Glorious* alive.

Extract from rehearsal observation by Jenny Duffy, research student placement, Wunderbar



SUMMARY AND QUESTIONS

1. Observations

a) The nature of the engagement and participation

Glorious engages non-performers, sometimes people with limited or no access to the arts, and involves them in an integral role in the re-imagining of the musical form. It also engages local musicians in the interpretation of the musical score. The work would not exist without the creative contribution of these individuals.

The non-performers become performers on stage. They perform but they are not required to act or to be involved in any dramatic action. They walk to the microphone, place flowers on the stage, exit. This movement is organised, you could say choreographed, but it is natural and minimal. I say perform rather than present because they are consciously taking part in an artform which has a formal structure. They are the authors of the text they speak but they have worked with the director on editing the content and selecting which sections will be repeated. The performers reveal as much about themselves and their feelings as they wish to disclose. The use of metaphor is powerful and discreet.

The journey to Newcastle reminds me of my life journey. There is a really, really steep hill that fits perfectly with my childhood. It is a relentless incline and one I am proud of reaching the summit of. At the top, there's a large grassy area, and I fly my kite there when the weather is good. - Pauline Act 1, *Glorious*

b) Reality as popular entertainment

Glorious is an antidote to reality TV. There are true stories, there is emotion, authenticity, reflection, self-possession. There is no sensationalism or sentimentality. Nobody breaks down in tears. As indicated earlier, the performance can generate a strong sense of togetherness for the people in the space, in the theatre. *Glorious* is powerful and moving but seeks to provoke empathy and reflection rather than a sentimental response.

c) Musical Theatre and Live Art

RSP's approach to the music theatre genre is playful and a provocative test of the expectations audiences might have for this genre. The issue of form did not emerge from this enquiry but it might be interesting to specifically ask both participants and audiences in the future about this.

d) Audience

What is interesting about *Glorious* is the diversity of the audience it appeared to attract in Newcastle. Through observation and interaction prior to and after the show, rather than via any hard data, the capacity audience of 88 seems to have consisted of: friends and relatives of the local cast; individuals who had taken part in the interventions and workshops; students and those attracted by Wunderbar Festival events in general.

e) The Aesthetic Third

After writing this report, I came across the paper *New Model Visual Arts Organisations & Social Engagement* by University of Central Lancashire Psychosocial Research Unit (October 2011). They present the concept of the 'aesthetic third', which is useful when thinking about socially

engaged practice and relevant to way the Glorious project has been conceived and delivered. They offer this definition:

Artistic outcome and aesthetic (whether conceived as aesthetic of process, product or both) is not subordinate to other social agendas. The artwork remains as an essential third object or point of dialogue between the arts organisation and members of the public who are not arts professionals. However, it may also act as a third between the provisional community involved in its production and appreciation (artists, curators, participating publics) and the social domain that it aspires in some measure to change.

2. Conclusions

Glorious in Newcastle delivered on the key stated aims for the project. The research undertaken for this report has produced evidence for the following conclusions about the creative process and the changes experienced by participants.

a) Process

1. The **qualities and values** that imbue the process are respect, trust, openness, kindness, enquiry, attention to detail, calmness and hospitality.
2. The **timescale** provides the opportunity to build relationships and offers a short period of intense productive activity.
3. The **letter writing intervention** is highly successful and works particularly well in a shopping centre
4. The **creative process places the people first**. The artistic form is the framework for interaction, creative enquiry is the vehicle for engagement and the focus for collective endeavour.
5. The **ambition** for the project's tangible outcome, the public performance, is inspiring for the participants without being overwhelming.
6. The process engenders **curiosity and mutual respect**.
7. Exploration and risk are **managed carefully** to ensure that the non-professional performers and musicians are in control of what they present to the public and that they are adequately prepared physically and technically to present themselves and their work with confidence, authenticity and style.

b) Change

The participants described the changes experienced as a result of being involved with *Glorious* in terms of:

- **feeling valued** for what they could offer
- being part of a **stimulating, nurturing process**
- enjoying the opportunity to **express themselves creatively and imaginatively**
- **communicating** productively, speaking and listening
- having the **space to reflect**
- experiencing/exploring **something new**
- following their **curiosity**

- enjoying being with new/other/different **people**
- acquiring **skills and knowledge**
- being part of an event with **professional production values**

3. Recommendations

1. **Music Theatre:** Further lines of enquiry with some audience groups might explore:
 - How does the *Glorious* treatment of the music theatre form relate to any expectations or definitions of live art?
 - How does it relate to contemporary musical theatre practice?
 - What expectations did the local non-performers and musicians bring at the start and how did their experience change their understanding of the form?
2. **Letters:** Could the audience be involved more actively at the performance event? Could they be invited to write and receive letters to strangers? Or another kind of intervention?
3. Undertake a **closer observation**, data capture and analysis of the people who stop to engage with the company and/or write letters in order to understand features of behaviour and interaction, perhaps with support of anthropology/social science students.
4. Could the Presenter give **formal feedback** to the company about the effects of the project on their audience/community/their own engagement strategies?
5. Rajni recommends developing the **pre-show welcome** piloted in Newcastle and a new post-show element that brings the cast and audience together.
6. How do we reflect on *Glorious* and communicate that to people?
7. Can the evaluation report be the start of a conversation with other companies and practitioners involved on socially engaged practice? For example, a seminar or round table discussion.
8. In future, some of the live content generated through the research interviews could be used to animate the evaluation report through links to edited footage online. This would require the review and consent of the interviewees and could enhance their experience of speaking and sharing with others.

As the future looms again
 As the past returns around
 As this place remembers us
 And we look to where we are

It is glorious

Here's to all the people here
 Here's to those who can't be here
 It's for us right here right now
 It's for us right here right now



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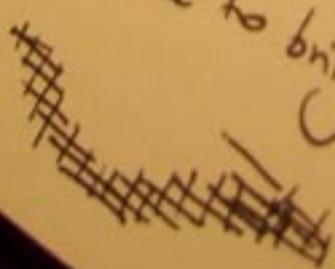
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- green
- belt
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- foam
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Appendix 1 Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the following people who gave their thoughts, feelings and ideas so generously for this study.

Interviewees

Lucille Acevedo-Jones	Designer, Rajni Shah Projects
Paul Bodie	Performer
Pauline Frost	Performer
Sheila Ghelani	Workshop facilitator, Rajni Shah Projects
Stephen Oliver Jones	Musician
David Marshall	Musician
Ilana Mitchell	Creative Director, Wunderbar
Mahsa Salali	Musician
Rajni Shah	Director, Rajni Shah Projects
Suzie Shrubbs	Musical Director, Rajni Shah Projects
Nicola Singh	Coordinator, Wunderbar
Kate Taylor	Performer

Special thanks to: Helena Suarez, Producer, Rajni Shah Projects; Jenny Duffy, research student placement, Wunderbar Festival

Bibliography

New Model Visual Arts Organisations & Social Engagement by University of Central Lancashire Psychosocial Research Unit (October 2011) <http://tiny.cc/xgZf2b>

Photographs

Lucille Acevedo-Jones (p 31)
Lucy Cash (p 1)
Steve @ 4130 Newcastle (pp 14, 18, 22, 27)
Stephen Oliver Jones (pp 11, 18)
Theron Schmidt (p 1)
Rajni Shah (pp 1, 5, 6, 14)

Glorious Newcastle credits

Performers: Paul Bodie, Pauline Frost, Hannah Goudie, John Paul Hewitt, Kate Taylor - with additional texts by Charlotte Bolam, Catherine Cullen, Keith Stephen Wearn

Musicians from the Gateshead Academy of Music and Sound: Richard Hetherington, Stephen Oliver Jones, David Marshall, Dominic Reed, Destra Orsheena Ross, Mahsa Salali, Tyron Spence

Rajni Shah Projects Glorious team for Newcastle: Lucille Acevedo-Jones, Becky Edmunds, Sheila Ghelani, Marty Langthorne, Mary Paterson, Ben & Max Ringham, Rajni Shah, Suzie Shrubbs, Beky Stoddart, Helena Suarez, Steve Wald, Chahine Yavroyan

Special thanks to: Phil, Lynne and the team at the Academy of Music and Sound, Angela Gallagher, Diana Kaye flowers, NE1 Rangers, Eldon Square, Northumbria University, Settle Down Café, Star and Shadow Cinema, Wunderbar Festival

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Funded by Arts Council England, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Jerwood Charitable Foundation, PRS for Music Foundation, Royal Victoria Hall Foundation and many generous individuals

Appendix 2 interview questions

GLORIOUS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS OCT-DEC 2011

RESEARCHER:ELIZABETH LYNCH

note: during the interviews with musicians I also asked some of the same questions as those posed to the artists

one NEWCASTLE Thursday 13 - 24 October 2011 (beginning)
Eldon Square shopping centre, face to face, and by phone

Newcastle performers and musicians

- 1 What is your name, whereabouts do you live?
- 2 What attracted you today?
- 3 Why did you decide to write a letter?
- 4 What are you most curious about in terms of this project?
- 5 For you, what are the three most important aspects of living in this area?
- 6 What do you think you will discover through taking part in *Glorious*?
- 7 What will the challenges be? Practical and personal

RSP team members

- 1 Please introduce yourself and tell about your role as an artist in this project
- 2 What interests you about *Glorious*?
- 3 What do you observe as the most striking aspects of the project?
- 4 What excites you about taking part?
- 5 What are you curious about in this particular location?
- 6 How do you want to stretch your creativity during the life of this project?
- 7 What are the challenges?

Wunderbar Festival team members

- 1 Please introduce yourself and tell me about your role as presenter in this project
- 2 What interests you about *Glorious*?
- 3 What do you observe as the most striking aspects of the project?
- 4 What excites you about presenting this work?
- 5 How have you prepared for the project in this location?
- 6 How do you hope the project will impact on your work?
- 7 What are the challenges?

two NEWCASTLE 28 October - 1 November 2011 (mid-way)

Telephone and face to face

Newcastle performers and musicians

- 8 During this project, what has surprised you or has been unexpected?
- 9 How do you think you communicate best? Speaking, writing, body language, visually, face to face, online etc
- 10 How do you best express your feelings?
- 11 How do you find working creatively with strangers?
- 12 What is glorious about this project?

RSP team members

- 8 During this project, what has surprised you or has been unexpected? What resources are you drawing on, creative or personal?
- 9 What impact has this project had on the way you work?
- 10 Are the challenges different to those you anticipated at the the start and how are you meeting them?
- 11 What have you discovered about the people in this location?
- 12 What is glorious about this project?

Wunderbar Festival team members

not interviewed at this stage

three NEWCASTLE 7 November - 9 December 2011 (post-performance)

By phone

Newcastle performers and musicians

- 13 After taking part in *Glorious*, how has it affected the way you feel and/or experience your community?
- 14 Have you discovered more about your role/place/contribution in this community?
- 15 How has taking part in *Glorious* affected the way you feel about your creativity?
- 16 How has taking part made you think or feel differently about the way we communicate?
- 17 Has this project made you think about any particular idea or issue?
- 18 What questions does it raise for you?
- 19 What will you take forward or carry with you from this experience?

RSP team members

- 13 Can you tell me about your experience of the performance in your role? How did the ideas and themes resonate with you?
- 14 What could be developed or changed?
- 15 How would you describe the nature of the collaboration between the artists, student musicians and the locally recruited people who performed?
- 16 Why do you think the individual performers took part in this art work?
- 17 How has taking part made you think or feel differently about the way we communicate?
- 18 Has this project made you think about any particular idea or issue?
- 19 What questions does it raise for you?
- 20 What will you take forward or carry with you from this experience?
- 21 Did you get any feedback from the audience or what did you think about their response?

Wunderbar Festival team members

- 13 During this project, what has surprised you or has been unexpected?
- 14 How do you effectively communicate this project internally and externally? What are the key points?
- 15 What impact has this project had on the way you are working? or how is the experience of producing *Glorious* making its impact on Wunderbar?

- 19 What is glorious about this project?
- 20 What will you take forward or carry with you from this experience?

Audience

- 1 How did the ideas explored in *Glorious* resonate/strike a chord with you (your feelings or emotions?)
- 2 How did it make you feel glorious?

Appendix 3 Newcastle Glorious timeline

October

Thursday 6th	RS arrives - make contact with local community orgs
7th	
8th	LAJ arrives, press interview - prep for interventions
9th	prep for interventions
Monday 10th	Interventions in Eldon Square, SG arrives (pm)
11th	Interventions, pm band rehearsal (LAJ to attend and talk about costume)
12th	Interventions, Ko Le from Culture Lab to attend and record
13th	Interventions
14th	Additional work finding participants and confirming all performers, HS arrives
15th	Workshop #1, SG + LAJ depart
16th	DAY OFF
Monday 17th	RS/HS to meet, RS to find additional performers as necessary
18th	HS depart, LAJ arrives, evening band rehearsal (LAJ to attend)
19th	One to one rehearsals with performers (RS + LAJ consultation)
20th	One to one rehearsals with performers (RS + LAJ consultation)
21st	Music reh + one to one rehearsals continue as necessary
22nd	Music reh + performers workshop, journalist attends, SS + LAJ depart
23rd	DAY OFF RS to write intro and any other bits
Monday 24th	SG arrives, one to one rehearsals with performers
25th	LAJ arrives, one to one rehearsals with performers (SG) + costume fittings
26th	Evening rehearsal for everyone, RS to lead, Phil to lead band
27th	Evening rehearsal for everyone, SG to lead
28th	DAY OFF for sorting stuff out!
29th	Full rehearsal with everyone, SS arrives (pm)
30th	Dress Rehearsal at Academy, tech team arrive
Monday 31st	GET IN - am: core team, evening: performers and musicians sound check

November

1st	GET IN, all meet MP, rehearsal and performance (everyone all day if possible)
2nd	Most of team leave in am RS, HS, LAJ to stay on a few days for Wunderbar Festival

Appendix 4 Aims for Glorious (as stated in 2009, when the project was initiated)

Our main aims are as follows:

- To create a new and exciting piece of British musical theatre, including an innovative costume design and new film at a time when many people feel disempowered and frustrated
- To engage with those who normally have little or no access to the arts
- To create 10 unique pieces of public intervention, each tailored to the host city or town
- To bring in new audiences to each partner venue
- To create 10 performances (some performed twice) that are unique to each venue and created with the people who live there
- To offer a creative legacy for each person who performs with the company
- To create a publication that celebrates and documents each performance
- To create an innovative pre-recorded score that is adapted at each venue and played alongside a range of local musical groups
- To create an online community of participants, partners and artists that grows through the tour

In summary, the project will benefit partners, audiences and the arts more widely by:

- Inviting a wide range of non-artists to engage with the arts in a professional setting.
- Allowing programmers to engage on a long term multi-faceted project that results in a performance in public space, a week-long workshop for local musicians and residents who are performing with the company, and a large-scale new musical that is unique to each venue.
- Creating an online community that will allow the company to support a legacy for all participants in a light touch but deep impact way (the website is already designed on an open-source platform that is capable of supporting this kind of engagement).
- Although *Glorious* will use a more conventional method of audience engagement (the audience will be seated for most of the show), the company plan to explore ways in which the audience are nevertheless implicated in the trajectory of the work. This will happen by inviting the audience to experience the on-stage installation in some way, possibly by passing through the stage during the finale.
- Generating audiences of over 2,500 for the theatre performances, who will be a mix of regular venue audiences, family and friends of the local performers, musical theatre audiences, and local people who have taken part in or witnessed earlier public interventions by the company.
- Creating the first musical from the Live Art sector.
- Pioneering a new model of touring that prioritises relationships and long term audience, artist and venue development.