

Press release: 27 June 2017

## Unfolding Theatre joins Arts Council's National Portfolio

**Unfolding Theatre has been selected by Arts Council to become a National Portfolio Organisation. This makes the company part of a portfolio of 831 companies across England delivering the Arts Council's strategic mission of Great Art and Culture for Everyone.**

Arts Council funding will support Unfolding Theatre's programme of touring theatre and participation workshops from 2018 to 2022. It is the first time the company has been awarded revenue funding. This core support means Unfolding Theatre can build on its successful track record by reaching even more audiences with its ambitious, inventive and joyful theatre productions and projects.

Artistic Director, Annie Rigby says, *"We are immensely proud and excited for what this will mean for Unfolding Theatre. It means we can make and tour theatre to more audiences and enable more people of all ages and backgrounds to take part in our creative processes."*

*"I'd like to say an enormous thank you to all of the organisations and individuals who've supported us over the last ten years. There's no way I could mention everyone, but a few special thanks to Northern Stage, Battersea Arts Centre and Live Theatre, who have been constant supporters, to xsite architecture, where we are based, and to The Cultural Spring, bait and Sage Gateshead who have commissioned us to create our most ambitious projects of recent years. I'd also like to say a special thank you to all of our audiences and people who've taken part in our creative projects, house bands and workshops. We look forward to four years of fantastic projects with even more of you."*

Unfolding Theatre's programme for 2018-22 includes site-specific performances in surprising locations in the North East, new touring theatre productions that will be presented at theatres and festivals across the UK and local participation projects that invite diverse people to get involved in making theatre.

Anna Disley, Chair of Unfolding Theatre's board, says, *"Unfolding Theatre's addition to the Arts Council's portfolio is wonderful for the north-east and the region's theatre sector. We are proud to make award winning theatre that is rooted here, made with artists and participants from the region. This funding will mean we can continue to make excellent work and ensure more people across the country get to experience it."*

### About Unfolding Theatre

**Unfolding Theatre** has established itself as one of the North East's leading contemporary theatre companies. Led by Artistic Director, Annie Rigby, it has built a reputation for big-hearted theatre that delights in bringing people together. The company brings together surprising combinations of people to generate remarkable theatre. Collaborators include artists and people from other walks of life. Described by the Guardian as *"thrillingly talented people"*, Unfolding Theatre's productions have consistently attracted critical acclaim and awards.

In 2016/17 the company reached 6,678 audience members and 1,169 took part in workshops and projects. Audiences and participants in their creative processes describe positive, sometimes profound, personal impact.

Dennis O'Brien, a member of the Sunderland house band, described taking part in *Putting The Band Back Together* (2016-17) as *"A fantastic experience. A few years ago this was a pipe dream – impossible to happen. Meeting you guys did change my life."*

***Putting The Band Back Together*** – Performance of the Year, The Journal Culture Awards 2017. Made with Ross Millard (The Futureheads), the show toured to over 3,000 audience members across the UK. At every show, local people were invited to join the house band. Over 400 people ended up playing alongside the show's professional company across 54 performances.

***Lands of Glass*** – Winner of Northern Stage's Title Pending Award for new theatre, 2014. This innovative production featured live music played on an orchestra of glass musical instrument. It opened at National Glass Centre in Sunderland before touring to Edinburgh Festival and nationally.

***What If?*** – Engaging Young People Award 2014, National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement. Made with Greenfield School and Durham University Earth Sciences researchers, this interactive show about curiosity reached over 1,000 young people across County Durham.

***Best in the World*** – Best Emerging Company Finalist, Total Theatre Awards 2012. This heart-warming, hilarious one-man show told stories from the noble sport of darts and invited audiences to celebrate their own 'gold medal moments'. It toured across the UK from 2012 to 2016.

***Building Palaces*** – Performance of the Year, The Journal Culture Awards 2010. Performed in The Boiler Shop, this promenade performance invited audiences into palaces built out percussion instruments, tea-cups, suitcases and even songs. The show was made with some of the North East's best-loved musicians and performers, including singer, Beccy Owen, percussionist, Brendan Murphy and actors Jane Arnfield, Alex Elliott and Pady O'Connor.

#### **Current work**

Unfolding Theatre is currently working with Sage Gateshead on ***Let The Beat Go On*** – a summer quest for families. This interactive event, which runs from 27 July until 26 August, will see children battling The Silencer to find stolen sounds and save music forever.

For more information about Unfolding Theatre and its work visit <http://www.unfoldingtheatre.co.uk>

Download a copy of Unfolding Theatre's most recent Annual Report at [http://www.unfoldingtheatre.co.uk/ut\\_report2016\\_web.pdf](http://www.unfoldingtheatre.co.uk/ut_report2016_web.pdf)

High res photographs are available on request. Please find lower res examples attached to this email.

#### **Press Contact:**

Annie Rigby, Artistic Director: [annie@unfoldingtheatre.co.uk](mailto:annie@unfoldingtheatre.co.uk)  
0794 652 3112  
@unfoldingtheatr