



Media Release
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Unlimited Celebrates One Year of Championing Artistic Excellence and Changing Perceptions

"A programme that's bucked stereotypes and packed a powerful creative punch"
Bella Todd, Time Out

UNLIMITED, the £3million programme delivered by Shape and Artsadmin, has concluded its first year supporting outstanding work by disabled artists, making an unprecedented impact on the cultural sector.

The work of nine artists was commissioned and showcased throughout 2014, appearing at many events across the UK and five overseas countries, reaching a total audience of over 14,000 through 309 performances. Unlimited also funded 17 artists through a research and development phase and co-commissioned an additional digital work with The Space, the arts portal created jointly by Arts Council England and the BBC.

The works came together at Southbank Centre's week-long Unlimited Festival, an international level showcasing opportunity that gained widespread attention from the press, arts industry and general public.

Artist **Jess Thom (Touretteshero)** commented:

"It exceeded my wildest expectations. It was amazing to have an audience of people from all over the world, as well as key programmers from the UK."

Artist **Sheila Hill** commented:

"Our work has reached a large and diverse audience more quickly than we would have anticipated. I don't think this would have been the case without the skilled support of the Unlimited team."

Unlimited now has over 90 allies. These venues, festivals, producers, promoters and individuals share Unlimited's aim to change the perception of disabled people within the arts. Through mentoring and festival attendance and direct support for artists, 80% of these allies have directly engaged with the Unlimited programme.

Further growth in engagement is expected over the next year with 55% of allies offering mentoring to disabled artists, 40% offering programming opportunities and 40% seeking further support with wider issues connected to programming.

Fierce festival's artistic director **Laura McDermott** commented:

"The overall tone of the project is fantastic. It is large-enough scale (and with sufficient funding) to make considerable impact and get noticed. The brand feels cool and contemporary and not preachy. The first round of commissions and the festival at Southbank have felt really vibrant. Celebrating difference rather than tip-toeing around it."

Unlimited senior producer **Jo Verrent** commented:

"Unlimited continues to exceed expectations - proving not just the quality of art from disabled artists but the demand for this work from festivals, programmers and venues in the UK and internationally. Its success really is all down to the quality of the work that is out there."

Unlimited may be celebrating its first year of success, but this is just the beginning of the programme's long term objective to significantly change the perceptions of disabled people within the arts.

Jo continues:

"Having selected this work and these artists, our job really begins - we have to make sure the cultural sector is ready to respond. That means conversations about programming, representation, visibility, language, access, audiences and much, much more. We all know one size doesn't fit all, so it's about sharing a range of approaches that work for different organisations - which is why we are so pleased that our allies are growing and are increasingly diverse."

Unlimited is funded by the National Lottery through Arts Council England (ACE), Creative Scotland (CS), Spirit 2012 and Arts Council Wales (ACW).

INFORMATION, IMAGES, INTERVIEWS CONTACT:

James Monteith (Shape) on 020 7424 7349 / james@shapearts.org.uk

Notes to Editors

Unlimited is delivered by the disability-led arts organisation Shape and arts producing organisation Artsadmin and funded by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and Creative Scotland. The programme supports disabled artists to develop their practice, forming new relationships and collaborations with producers, venues and promoters; it will increase distribution of the work (through touring, including international touring, and digital iterations) affording greater opportunities for audiences to see some of the very the best work available from disabled artists right across the UK and internationally. The Unlimited initiative also includes an aligned programme called Unlimited Impact which focuses on supporting young people, geographic reach and ensuring legacy.

www.weareunlimited.org.uk

Shape Arts is a disability-led arts organisation working to improve access to culture for disabled people by developing opportunities for disabled artists, training cultural institutions to be more open to disabled people, and running participatory arts and development programmes. www.shapearts.org.uk

Artsadmin is an arts lab for the 21st Century, supporting the creation of new performance, site-specific and interdisciplinary work by the most talented and innovative artists through mentoring, development and producing support. www.artsadmin.co.uk

Arts Council England champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2010 and 2015, we will invest £1.9 billion of public money from government and an estimated £1.1 billion from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. www.artscouncil.org.uk

Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland on behalf of everyone who lives, works or visits here. We enable people and organisations to work in and experience the arts, screen and creative industries in Scotland by helping others to develop great ideas and bring them to life. We distribute funding provided by the Scottish Government and the National Lottery. For further information about Creative Scotland please visit www.creativescotland.com

Spirit of 2012 is an independent trust established with a £47m endowment from the Big Lottery Fund. Our vision is inspired by the London 2012 events that went beyond sport and reached out to communities across the UK.

Spirit invests in happiness; empowering people to get out, be involved and feel better. We're working to ensure that the spirit and opportunities from the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics is felt everywhere. By connecting events to communities across the country, we ensure our investment is of local, regional and national benefit. We tackle isolation and disadvantage by supporting those providing opportunities in sport, physical activity, culture and the arts, volunteering and social action.

We believe that by enabling people to participate in a wide variety of activities, we can improve wellbeing, challenge perceptions of disability and lead to greater social cohesion. We invest nationally and locally to build on the energy, creativity and positive spirit we saw during the London 2012 Games, where people felt better because they were helping others, celebrating local and national success and joining together in a public cause.

www.spiritof2012trust.org.uk @so2012trust

Arts Council of Wales is an independent charity, established by [Royal Charter](#) in 1994. Its members are appointed by the Welsh Government's Deputy Minister for Culture, Sports and Tourism. Its principal sponsor is the [Welsh Government](#). It also distributes funding from the [National Lottery](#) and raises additional money from a variety of public and private sector sources. It's the country's funding and development organisation for the arts. Working together with the Welsh Government, it's able to show how the arts are helping to meet the Government's policy ambitions. Its vision is of a creative Wales where the arts are central to the life of the nation. www.artswales.org.uk

Attendance statistics were sourced from box office data and on-site surveys. Ally survey data was taken from a sample of 16 allies interviewed. More detailed information is available upon request.

Major Projects (England)

Edmund the Learned Pig, Fittings MultiMedia Arts

Based on an unpublished poem by Edward Gorey Edmund the Learned Pig is a magical theatre piece for children aged 8+ and families that fuses BSL sign language, puppets, Aerial-circus, deaf storytelling techniques, music and song. A co-production between Fittings MultiMedia Arts, Krazy Kat and The Royal Exchange Manchester, it features new songs by Martyn Jacques of The Tiger Lillies, script by Mike Kenny and a cast of deaf and disabled performers. Unlimited will support a tour of this work.

Exposure, Jo Bannon

Exposure investigates how we look, how we are looked at and if we can ever really be seen. An intimate one to one performance, it is a tender and tentative look into autobiography, asking how fully we reveal our self - to ourselves, to another, with another. Unlimited will support further touring of the work and the creation of three new short films to accompany it, made in collaboration with visually impaired artists, researchers and activists.

Let Me Stay Vital Xposure

Let Me Stay is a tender and unique exploration of the impact of Alzheimer's on family relations. Artist Julie McNamara has recorded her Mother's songs and stories, filmed and photographed her in all her glory, over many years. The result is a compelling solo theatre performance, an extraordinary love letter straight from the heart welded with a wicked underlying humour. Unlimited will support additional touring of this new work.

Otherwise Unchanged, Owen Lowery

Otherwise Unchanged, published in December 2012, is Owen Lowery's first major poetry collection, featuring poems on various formal and informal subjects including Lowery's experience of hospitalisation and disability following a spinal injury, war, love, and a series of poems responding to work of Turner Prize nominee Dame Paula Rego. Unlimited will support a reading tour of Otherwise Unchanged.

RING THE CHANGES+, Chisato Minaminura

RING THE CHANGES+ is an interactive dance performance created by London based deaf artist and former member of CandoCo Dance Company Chisato Minaminura. Choreographing what she calls "visual sound/music", Chisato uses interactive technology to create an innovative sense experience for hearing and non-hearing audiences. Unlimited will support development of the piece into a full-length dance work and for the work to tour.

The Dinner Party Revisited, Katherine Araniello

In a twist on a 1920s comedy sketch in which an elderly woman hosts a celebration dinner for the friends she has outlived, live art performance, The Dinner Party Revisited, sees the artist play host to six television monitor "guests", all played by Araniello. Their unscripted interactions with her live presence and her alcohol infused butler form a satirical and

darkly comic take on some of the clichés around disability. Unlimited will support the development and presentation of the work.

***THE FLICKERING DARKNESS* Juan delGado**

Juan delGado's immersive multi-screen installation explores ideas about urban territory, displacement and economy. Filmed at the Corabastos market in Bogotá, the work follows the journey that produce takes from its arrival before dawn to its consumption throughout most of the day in a variety of dishes at eating establishments across the social spectrum. Unlimited will support technical development and further presentations of the work.

Major Projects (Scotland)

***Dancer*, Ian Johnston**

A performance art work created by Ian Johnston, Gary Gardiner and Adrian Howells, *Dancer* is a gentle provocation on what it is to be a 'dancer'. Ian and Gary both love to dance in public. Neither are trained dancers. Ian and Gary are two artists asking questions about visibility, opportunity and experiences; as well as sharing a few of their dances. Unlimited will support a tour of the work.

***Wendy Hoose*, Birds of Paradise Theatre**

The creative forces of *Birds of Paradise*, Random Accomplice come together for the first time to bring audiences a frank and hilarious sex comedy - *Wendy Hoose* by Johnny McKnight. Directed by lead artist Robert Softley Gale and Johnny McKnight. Jake and Laura are two twenty year olds searching for love in all the wrong places! In the comedic style of the production, *Wendy Hoose* includes audio description, BSL and animated surtitles. Unlimited will support a tour of the work.

More information on the commissions and R&D projects can be found here
<http://weareunlimited.org.uk/commissions/>