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## **Unlimited goes International with ACE Ambitions of Excellence Award**

Unlimited, the commissioning programme that supports disabled artists develop ambitious and high quality work, today announced an Ambitions of Excellence Award of £759,949 from Arts Council England to build a three-year international programme. The award is also match-funded by the British Council.

Unlimited International will extend the global impact of Unlimited by co-commissioning extraordinary English and international disabled artists to further transform the cultural sector worldwide in relation to access and equality.

In 2016, working with British Council, Southbank Centre and Tramway, Unlimited - delivered by Shape and Artsadmin - will tour work from Japan, Brazil and Australia throughout England in 2016, supported by Pallant House, Drake Music and Watershed to help build momentum in the lead up to the co-commissions process.

Six research and development awards chosen from an open application process will be supported, leading to three full commissions, each led by disabled artists from England and one other country. The full commissioned works will tour at least three countries upon completion.

Unlimited international's key objectives are to ensure that disabled artists worldwide can gain skills and extend their practice, but also build on Unlimited's work embedding disabled artists within the cultural sector.

**Joyce Wilson**, London Area Director, **Arts Council England**, said: *"Unlimited continues to respond to the very high demand for ambitious new work by Deaf and disabled artists. The commissioned works and associated Southbank Unlimited Festival are proving instrumental in shifting the attitudes of not only venues, programmers and producers but also audiences. Unlimited International offers significant scope to grow this impact worldwide, delivering demonstrable change and extending the international profile of British Deaf and disabled artists."*

Since Unlimited's launch in 2013, £935,832 has been awarded to artists working in dance, theatre, performance, music, visual art and literature, and reached audiences of over 75,000 through 1,318 performances, installations, screenings and workshops in the UK. Given its success at home, the programme's natural next step is to work beyond the UK's shores, continuing to change perceptions of disability with great art by disabled people on a global scale.

**Jo Verrent**, Senior Producer, **Unlimited**, said: *“Unlimited International will enable Unlimited to take a crucial step forwards within the global positioning of disabled artists. Working in partnership with British Council, we can push disabled artists to the forefront of the creative sector, transforming perceptions and ultimately influencing how disability is considered around the world. We are delighted Arts Council England has backed our vision – and can’t wait to enable disabled artists to take over the world – literally!”*

**Tony Heaton OBE**, Chief Executive, **Shape**, said: *“Shape is proud to continue its successful partnership with Artsadmin on the Unlimited Programme. As an organisation with national and international reach, this marks an ambitious step forward for us and another great opportunity for the talented disabled artists we support.”*

**Neil Webb**, Director Theatre & Dance, British Council, said: *“This is really exciting news and a testament to the ambition of the sector and the quality of work being created. In 2012 the British Council supported five international collaborations for Unlimited and the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. Since then we have remained a key Unlimited partner helping to realise the international ambitions of the UK’s disabled artists. We are proud to be working with so many of these artists in our programmes, raising awareness and changing perceptions of disability around the world. This Ambition for Excellence award will enable us to raise the bar even higher, and I can’t wait to witness the results.”*

**For images, interview opportunities or more information, contact James Monteith at Shape on 020 7424 7349 / [james@shapearts.org.uk](mailto:james@shapearts.org.uk)**

#### **Notes to Editors**

1. **Unlimited** is an arts commissioning programme offering talented disabled artists funds and mentoring support to develop, produce and show ambitious work. The aim of Unlimited is to embed work by disabled artists within the UK cultural sector, reach new audiences and shift perceptions of disabled people. Unlimited is a £3m three-year programme delivered in partnership by Shape Arts and Artsadmin, with funding from Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, Arts Council Wales and Spirit of 2012. Unlimited includes an aligned programme called Unlimited Impact which focuses on supporting young people, geographic reach and ensuring legacy. [www.weareunlimited.org.uk](http://www.weareunlimited.org.uk)
2. **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](http://www.shapearts.org.uk)
3. **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](http://www.artsadmin.co.uk)

4. **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 2015 and 2018, we plan to invest £1.1 billion of public money from government and an estimated £700 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)
  
5. **The British Council** is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. They create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide. They work in more than 100 countries and their 8,000 staff – including 2,000 teachers – work with thousands of professionals and policy makers and millions of young people every year by teaching English, sharing the arts and delivering education and society programmes. They are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter. A core publicly-funded grant provides 20 per cent of their turnover which last year was £864 million. The rest of their revenues are earned from services which customers around the world pay for, such as English classes and taking UK examinations, and also through education and development contracts and from partnerships with public and private organisations. All their work is in pursuit of our charitable purpose and supports prosperity and security for the UK and globally. [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org). <http://twitter.com/britishcouncil> and <http://blog.britishcouncil.org/>.