A MOMENT'S PEACE THEATRE

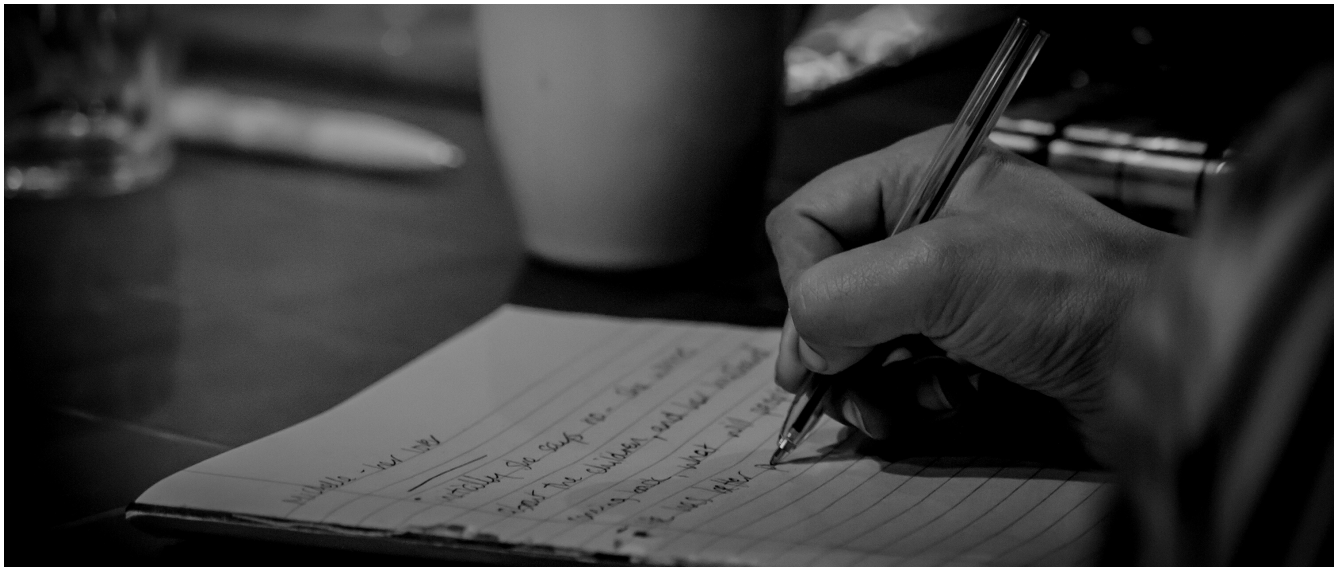
# STORIES TO SURVIVE TO

## PROJECT REPORT

**PART OF CREATIVE ACTION 2019-20**

BY A MOMENT'S PEACE THEATRE COMPANY

# OUR STORY



## ABOUT A MOMENT'S PEACE THEATRE COMPANY

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

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

**AMP has a long history of working with women across Glasgow.** At each turn we re-discover the way in which women's experiences and expertise are undervalued, side-lined and often made invisible. Stories to Survive to – alongside our forthcoming project Resisters – is our productive and creative response to this silencing; facilitating processes and creating work that draw women out of the margins and into the centre, whilst building solidarity and peer networks that strengthen individual and community capacity.

Across 2019-2020, A Moment's Peace undertook a series of research and development periods; zooming in on new ideas, and generating platforms for our next substantial pieces of work due to culminate under the banner of **Creative Action**.

Stories to Survive to was a pilot project as part of this research and development stage supported by Foundation Scotland, Creative Scotland and The Robertson Trust.

# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**Stories to Survive To** brought together our oldest group **The Women's Creative Company**, and our newest collaborators **Social Bite's Women's Group**. Between March and June 2019, the two groups worked with Fringe First Award winning playwright **Lynda Radley** to create and present short pieces of new writing that tell stories of resilience and hope; that celebrate the strength of women pushed to the margins.

The project focused on developing the participants imaginative voices, crafting individual and collective experiences into preformative stories. Our aim was to connect the women with a creative project that facilitated them to craft their experiences, develop a creative voice and strengthen confidence in expressing ideas and concerns.A zine publication of the works was created and launched at a public sharing event in June 2019.

# BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

This project saw our first partnership with **Social Bite**, an orginisation on a mission to end homelessness in Scotland.

Within Glasgow, Social Bite operates a social enterprise café, which puts its profits and space back into working with those affected by homelessness, as well as those with social and financial vulnerability.

The **Social Bite Women's group** aims to provide a safe space for women who have experience of homelessness, to come together, share a meal and reflect on their strengths and mutual support.

"I THINK THAT THE GROUP REALLY CAME TOGETHER. OFTEN THERE CAN BE DIFFICULTIES OFF WHAT TO TALK ABOUT AND THIS GAVE A FOCUS FOR THE GROUP TO SHARE A BIT OF THEMSELVES WITHOUT REALLY EVEN REALISING IT AND GOT THE VALIDATION OF BEING LISTENED TO AND APPLAUDED. THERE WAS A LOT OF LAUGHING AND I THINK A FEW NEW FRIENDSHIPS STARTED AS A RESULT." **WELLBEING COORDINATOR, SOCIAL BITE**

# PROJECT REACH

From June to December 2019 Stories to Survive to engaged and involved:

## 24

### CREATIVE WORKSHOPS

## 29

### PARTICIPANTS

## 8

### VOLUNTEERS

## 1

### PUBLIC SHARING EVENT

At Scottish Youth Theatre Glasgow, shared with:

## 80

### AUDIENCE MEMBERS

The project engaged a **Lead Artist** (Playwright), AMP's **Associate Producer** and **Artistic Director**, a **Zine Artist**, **Illustrator**, **Sound Artist**, **Videographer**, **Photographer**, 3 **Professional Actors**, an **additional Lead Artist** (Music & Songwriting) and a **Marketing Officer**,

We were supported by our partners at Social Bite, Project Coordinator Ewain Black, Social Impact Manager Marzena Farana-Sherlock, and Training and Support Worker Laura Stewart.

# THE ZINE

Over a series of **21 workshops** between March and June 2019, the two groups worked with Fringe First Award winning playwright **Lynda Radley** to create pieces of new writing. Our aim was to connect the women with a creative project that facilitated them to craft their experiences, develop a creative voice and strengthen confidence in expressing ideas and concerns.

Alongside volunteers Carolina Perez, Belle Jones and Elizabeth Malner, as well as the support from Social Bite's volunteer team, Lynda used a range of creative techniques to ease the participants into gaining confidence in their abilities, and developing creative skills to create works based on their reflections and experiences as women.

"I MET MANY PEOPLE I NEVER MET BEFORE AND I AM PROUD THAT THEY THINK I CAN WRITE SOMETHING...

I AM ALIVE, I HAVE SOME BREATHING SPACE."

**PARTICIPANT, STORIES TO SURVIVE TO**

The pieces of writing were collated together into a zine publication framed and elevated professionally by Zine Artist, **Saffa Khan**, and Illustrator **Jenny Seop**.

"I FELT REALLY OVERWHELMED WHEN I SAW THE BOOK OF ALL OUR WORK OVER THE LAST WEEKS." **PARTICIPANT, STORIES TO SURVIVE TO**

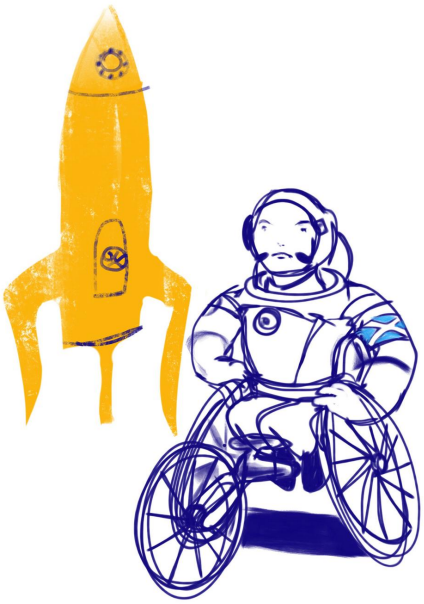
The zine publication provided an opportunity to bring the work of the two groups together, and created a route through which the work could be shared and begin a conversation with a wider audience.

I KEPT READING IT OVER AND OVER. IT'S A NICE MEMENTO OF WHAT WE CREATED."
**PARTICIPANT, STORIES TO SURVIVE TO**

The zine publication was distributed to the two groups, their friends and family, associates from the arts community and organisations interested in exploring artistic practice and its impact on working with women, experiences of homelessness and marginalised narratives.

"IT WAS FABULOUSLY DONE AND A BEAUTIFUL KEEPSAKE TO CHERISH."
**PARTICIPANT, STORIES TO SURVIVE TO**

"IT WAS GOOD HEARING EVERYONE'S IMAGINATION AND THOUGHTS WORKING TOGETHER. GREAT WAY OF BONDING TOGETHER AND GETTING TO KNOW THE LADIES A LOT BETTER, THEIR INTELLIGENCE AND HAVING A LAUGH." **PARTICIPANT, SOCIAL BITE**



# THE EVENT

The publication was launched at a celebratory sharing event at Scottish Youth Theatre in June 2019, where the group's works were performed to an audience of 80, by professional actors, **Belle Jones, Patricia Panther, and Stephen Rae and Maryam Hamidi**.

One of the participants from Social Bite's Women's group was confident enough to perform her own piece, and did so alongside the performing actors.

As part of the process, audio recordings of the pieces were captured, by sound artist **Fiona Jones**. This allowed us to document the performative element of the project and, along with the zine, provide a lasting legacy for the project. The event was photographed by **Najma Abukar.**

"SEEING MY WORK PERFORMED AND BEING WELL RECEIVED BY THE AUDIENCE MADE ME HAVE MORE SELF BELIEF IN MY ABILITY TO WRITE. IT ALSO GAVE ME CONFIDENCE AND A SENSE OF WORTH"

**PARTICIPANT, STORIES TO SURVIVE TO**

"IT WAS FUN AND RELAXED. AMP AND SOCIAL BITE MADE GOING TO THE EVENT STRESS FREE BY PROVIDING TRANSPORT AND WE LAUGHED A LOT AS A GROUP WE HAD NEVER BEEN OUT TOGETHER AS A GROUP BEFORE." **PARTICIPANT, STORIES TO SURVIVE TO**

"SEEING MY WORK PERFORMED AND BEING WELL RECEIVED BY THE AUDIENCE MADE ME HAVE MORE SELF BELIEF IN MY ABILITY TO WRITE. IT ALSO GAVE ME CONFIDENCE AND A SENSE OF WORTH." **PARTICIPANT, STORIES TO SURVIVE TO**

# DIGITAL LEGACY

## THE PROJECT FILM AND TRAILER

The evening was professionally filmed by videographer **Jassy Earl**, and participants and audience alike were given the chance to reflect on the event, the publication and the project as a whole.

## VIEW SHORT FILM ON VIMEO

**https://vimeo.com/350690365**

## VIEW SHORT TRAILER

**https://vimeo.com/350690365**

## THE ZINE

The 36 page zine of creative works is available to read online:

**https://issuu.com/amomentspeace/docs/stories_to_survive_to_zine_2019**

## THE AUDIO RECORDINGS

The Audio Recording are available to listen to on soundcloud.

**https://soundcloud.com/user-651123445**

# OUTCOMES

## OUTCOME:

**Women from across Glasgow, predominantly from marginalised communities, with minimal access to arts activity, improve their creative and communication skills**

# 100%

Of responding participants felt they had **learned new creative skills**

# 93%

Felt that they had learned new soft skills such as **communication, increased confidence and working together as a group.**

"I LEARNED DEVISING AND ARTICULATING IDEAS, WORKING IN A GROUP MADE THIS EASIER. I LEARNED TEAMWORK, LOOKING AT A PICTURE AND REALLY LOOKING AT ALL THE DIFFERENT THINGS THAT COULD BE GOING ON."

**PARTICIPANT, STORIES TO SURVIVE TO**

""I FEEL I CAME OUT MY SHELL MORE." **PARTICIPANT, STORIES TO SURVIVE TO**

"I HAVE WRITTEN DIALOGUE AND MADE CHARACTERS WHICH WERE BOTH NEW TECHNIQUES FOR ME" **PARTICIPANT, STORIES TO SURVIVE TO**

There were significant increases in confidence levels as a result from the project with participants noticing positive rises in ability to work together as a group, to listen better to other ideas and opinions, to feel more relaxed at sharing and more autonomy and ability to express opinions and creative ideas.

**"It built up my confidence level, I wrote my own true story which I never felt able to do before."** Participant, Social Bite

**"I really enjoyed it a lot and it was an amazing experience in my life."** Participant, Social Bite

The perceptive recognition for the women to have a more creative support platform to express themselves, move beyond past traumas, connect as a group and work together with a creative goal, had been recognised in the current wellbeing co-coordinator of the group. After the project he fed back:

> Our women's group had been running for 2 years before the "Stories to Survive to" project. As a service we are often trying to take care of people's basic needs by providing food. But in our community sit down meals, Social Suppers, and particularly in our women's group, we are making an attempt to provide connection and value that addresses **social isolation, loneliness and issues around self-worth and confidence**... The Stories to Survive to project has probably thus far **provided this in the most clear and tangible way**. It was **transformative to the women as individuals** as well as altering the dynamic of the group itself by allowing them to express themselves in an informal and non-exposing way.
>
> **Ewain Black, Coordinator, Social Bite**

# OUTCOMES

A second outcome for the project was for the **participating women to feel more confident within themselves and more aware of their own abilities.**

Participants were guided through a self-reflective creative process that focused in on their strengths, abilities, and unique qualities, including sharing the work they created with other participants and audience members, seeing this documented in the zine publication.

The sharing event allowed the women to see their work again elevated, framed by the professional theatre venue and actors performing the works and bringing them to life.

"A LOT OF WOMEN WERE MORE CONFIDENT TO VOCALISE THEIR IDEAS AS THE WEEKS PROGRESSED AND MENTIONED THAT THEY LIKED 'GIVING THE BRAIN SOMETHING TO DO.'"
**LYNDA RADLEY, LEAD ARTIST**

As well as developing new creative skills, soft skills, and confidence, the therapeutic elements of the process were evident as the women observed an improvement in their sense of mental health and well-being. Participants reflected that they felt more connected with their community after taking part, as the project encouraged connectivity, and reduced feelings of isolation and a feeling of deeper connection to others in the group.

> PEOPLE SPOKE ABOUT THE RELEASE OF BEING ABLE TO SPEAK ABOUT DIFFICULT THINGS, AND ALSO ABOUT BEING ABLE TO FREE THEMSELVES BY PLACING IT IN ART, OUTSIDE OF THEMSELVES... COMMUNITY. CONNECTION WAS THE THEME THROUGHOUT FOR BOTH GROUPS.
> **LEAD ARTIST, LYNDA RADLEY**

# 86%

Of responding participants selected that they had observed or felt **positive increases in mental health and wellbeing.**

**"It helped me to relax more. To look at things differently, not just the obvious first thoughts but what might be going on."** Participant Social Bite

# 76%

Of responding participants felt more **connected with their community** after taking part in the project.

**"I think that the group really came together. Often there can be difficulties on what to talk about and this gave a focus for the group to share a bit of themselves without really even realising it and got the validation of being listened to and applauded. There was a lot of laughing and I think a few new friendships started as a result. The feedback from the event was that it really gave the women a sense of pride and improved self esteem."**
Ewain, Social Bite Coordinator

**"I enjoyed it very much and made lots of friends. It was really good, brought us together."** Participant Social Bite

**"It means a lot to me. Makes me feel so good. I have depression but everybody in here makes me feel different. I'm in the community."** Participant, Stories to Survive to

# 100%

Of the responding participants expressed that they highly enjoyed the project, **connecting with the other women's group**, **having their works performed professionally** and **sharing their work with the public**.

**"It was fun and relaxed. AMP and Social Bite made going to the event stress free by providing transport and we laughed a lot as a group and we had never been out together as a group before ."** Participant Social Bite

**"It was good hearing everyone's imagination and thoughts working together. Great way of bonding together and getting to know the ladies a lot better, their intelligence and having a laugh."** Participant, Social Bite

**"Good to meet lots of other women from other backgrounds and it was also nice that other women also took their kids along too."** Participant, Social Bite

Participants fed back that they felt supported in accessing the theatrical venue chosen for the sharing event,

**"Normally I wouldn't have confidence to go to theatre on my own but because we were part of a group, it felt ok and relaxed."** Participant, Social Bite

**"The zine was fantastic, it gave the participants something tangible to have as a memento to the project and it was nice watching them all looking for their name, work and photos. I loved watching their excitement in going to the event and being so engaged at the performance. I spoke to one women who brought her young child and she said she felt relaxed and not intimidated; everyone, including cast were welcoming."** Volunteer, Sories to Survive to

The journey of the project was guided by Lead Artist and Playwright Lynda Radley. Lynda and volunteers noted that there was lack of confidence initially at achieving the outputs of the project.

One of the volunteers spoke about how both she and the participants were suffering from an element of "imposter syndrome", and how this transformed over the course of the project, ending in elation and feelings of achievement, pride and connection.

"I LIKED IT BECAUSE IT GAVE US FORWARD VISION. IT WAS REMARKABLE." **PARTICIPANT, STORIES TO SURVIVE TO**

# 93%

Of responding participants expressed that **they would like to take part in another creative project** and that Stories to Survive to **had inspired them,** having developed creative voices, confidence and feelings of self-worth.

"I MET MANY PEOPLE I NEVER MET BEFORE AND I AM PROUD THAT THEY THINK I CAN WRITE SOMETHING. I AM ALIVE, I HAVE SOME BREATHING SPACE." **PARTICIPANT, STORIES TO SURVIVE TO**

"I FELT REALLY SUPPORTED AND ENCOURAGED." **PARTICIPANT, STORIES TO SURVIVE TO**

# ARTIST & VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

“This has been a valuable learning experience for me. Working as a scribe for the women at the social bite group, I feel I developed my ability to separate facilitation from my own creative instincts. For example I caught what I was attempting to be dramaturgy, steering the script someone else was writing in a different direction and had to correct myself and be aware of it in future. If the writer wants to write a happy story with little conflict or obstacles, who am I to try and convince them otherwise! **Volunteer, Stories to Survive to**”

“A lot of women became more confident to vocalise their ideas as the sessions progressed. In terms of my own development, I learned that the plan doesn't always go to plan! Planning a session should always have a plan B, particularly for a group who are new to the creative process. I learned to demonstrate things in alternative ways to meet everyone's needs, strengths and weaknesses. **Volunteer, Stories to Survive to**”

> The project encouraged me to be more bold and confident when it comes to my own writing. More importantly, it made me appreciate and reflect on the immense value of participatory arts and the engagement with the local community. There is great creative energy here that can forge routes into active experience and artistic creation of many kinds. **Volunteer, Stories to Survive to**

> The event was a great success. The zine was a really lovely way to commemorate the work and empower the writers. Several women commented on the positive response they had when showing the zine to family and friends. The participants seemed to really enjoy seeing their words on the stage, hearing other people react to their work and meeting the women from the other group. It was striking how naturally diverse the audience for the sharing was and I felt the positivity in the room was palpable. **volunteer, Stories to Survive to**

> I would like to do more of the same. I think my leadership skills are improving and it's nice to see a finished result from a session that you led on. **Volunteer, Stories to Survive to**

> I have a greater understanding of homelessness, experience of being a lead artist, lateral thinking and problem solving, further editing experience and managing volunteers... A very satisfying project, with challenges but also great rewards and satisfaction in terms of seeing the impact on the participants and their growth as artists and people. **Lead Artist, Lynda Radley**

After the project event in June 2019, we were able to offer the groups an addition 3 creative workshops in November and December led by Artist **Clare McBrien**. Clare worked with the groups on songwriting/musical workshops, using the women's writing as a source of inspiration and springboard for for creating song lyrics, and bringing this to life musically.

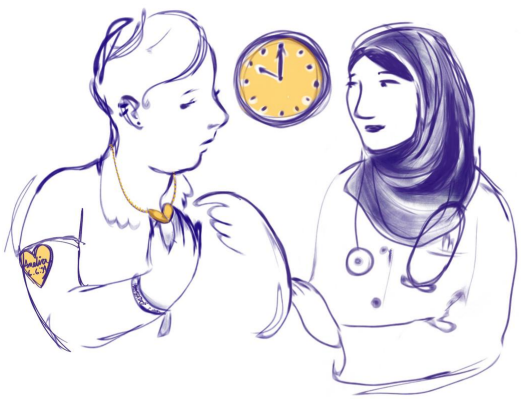
The workshops culminated in a short musical piece being created and recorded.

# CASE STUDY

One of the participating women confided to the facilitating team that before participating in the project she felt frequently overwhelmed with feelings of despair and was struggling with depression. She often felt isolated and disconnected from community.

She had little confidence in herself, her abilities and capabilities at the start of the project and had doubts that the project would be achievable, for her or the women's group as a whole.

By the end of the project she had produced and contributed to the creative works as part of the group, had increased levels of confidence and joy, and a much deeper sense of connection to her community. She expressed that she felt accepted and grateful for the support of the group and project:



"COMING HERE HAS REALLY HELPED MY MENTAL HEALTH. WHEN I FIRST STARTED COMING I WAS REALLY DEPRESSED BUT MEETING ALL THESE AMAZING WOMEN HAS REALLY HELPED ME...

I'M THE ONLY WOMEN OF COLOUR IN THIS GROUP AND THEY ACCEPTED ME NO PROBLEM. I REALLY APPRECIATE THAT."

**PARTICIPANT, STORIES TO SURVIVE TO**

# LEGACY

We consider 'Stories to Survive to' to be a pilot project, one that has the capacity to grow into a longer-term partnership between AMP and the Social Bite women's group and that will expand upon our commitment to working with individuals experiencing homelessness, as well as our existing group The Women's Creative Company.

We are currently fundraising for a new women's performance project **Resisters** and would like to engage both groups in this if we are successful. We have also recognised the positive impact of this pilot and recognise that Stories to Survive to is a successful model that could be adapted for other groups.

We are delighted with the strong partnerships formed during this process and are encouraged by the incredibly honest and positive feedback from our participants, partners, volunteers and facilitators.

We hope that our work with these groups will continue to grow over the year, as we share marginalised women's stories, provide  a platform for their voices, and celebrate their strength.

Make time to write every day whatever the weather. The sky is always listening. Speak your truth, always find words to be healed and nourished.

Share what you feel. Each of us have stories to tell. Golden half hour. Keep dancing.

PARTICIPANTS, STORIES TO SURVIVE TO

A MOMENTS PEACE

**With thanks to our partners and funders:**

SOCIAL BITE | GOOD FOOD for a GOOD CAUSE

LOTTERY FUNDED

The ROBERTSON Trust

TAMPON TAX COMMUNITY FUND

Women's Fund for Scotland Inspiring Women

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**In Partnership with Social Bite**