



# Where We Grow

AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 2023  
EVALUATION REPORT



**BLACK  
COUNTRY  
TOURING**





*Adrian B. Earle and Ishtiaq Hussain perform Ritual for the Birth of a Garden during Where We Grow.*



*Sam Frankie Fox & Ricardo Santos Rocha perform the Sleeping Seeds during Where We Grow with BSL interpretation from Jamal Hussain of Deafscope.*



*Sophina Jagot, Emma Waterford and Katy Rose Bennett perform The Wild Wood Within during Where We Grow.*



*Rochi Rampal and Bohdan Piasecki perform The Long Way Round during Where We Grow with BSL interpretation from Olivia Whitter.*

# EXPLORING OUR CONNECTION TO GREEN SPACES

Where We Grow has seen Black Country Touring exploring people's connection to green spaces. During the pandemic, many people became reconnected with the outdoors and nature, with some finding community and sanctuary in community gardens. Continuing to address the lack of access to the arts in the Black Country by building on the working model that BCT has developed since 2018, Where We Grow embodied the company ethos of *big ideas in small spaces*, providing live performances of poetry, theatre and storytelling in community gardens.



## CELEBRATING LOCAL SPACES

Where We Grow celebrated the importance of local green spaces. Coming out of the pandemic and back into live performances, it was more important than ever to build relations with community spaces and make a proactive effort to go to where our audiences are. Community gardens and their communities are often hyper-local and in areas with very little green space. Partnering with community gardens allowed us to bring live performances to the gardens, engaging audiences that were incredibly diverse and had strong connections to their local areas.

## CELEBRATING LOCAL AUDIENCES

A key aim of the project was to strengthen our existing relationships with gardens and to build new ones. Where We Grow was to lay the ground work for a second year of the project. We wanted to centre the stories of real people with real relationships to the gardens, making the pieces specifically tailored to the heart of each space. Involving the people who work tirelessly to make these gardens thrive for their local communities was one of our top priorities.

“

Absolutely mesmerising. Every performance was wonderful.

Amazing. A beautiful tribute to the amazing space and work done at Gatis.

Lovely to be here today. Didn't know it existed!  
Lovely place to bring young children.

”

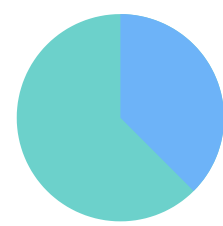




“ BCT honestly have been brilliant, they made sure we all had the right support, provided regular updates, plans etc and made sure we all communicated well and were able to voice ideas and suggestions. - *Artist Feedback* ”

Where We Grow was shaped by people that created, developed and built community at the green spaces that became cornerstones of their local areas. Artists held staff, volunteers and garden visitors in conversations that inspired the pieces that were tailor-made for each garden. Artists were paired together and partnered with a specific garden, leaving space for time and proper investment by artists to speak to people who were working at or visiting the garden.

We had four days of performances of all four pieces, with each garden having their own day. We always advocate for an open, collaborative and encouraging environment. Artists lead the decisions in research, development and presentation of work.



55.6% Female Creative Team  
 11% Black Caribbean Creative Team  
 11% Pakistani Creative Team  
 22% LGBTQ+ Creative Team

“ Seeing the show today has made me feel calm. I feel peaceful, yet normally I'm very anxious. We don't have a garden, and I've tried to put nice things on the footpath for neighbours to share, which has worked in bringing us together. but to know about this garden - well it's a sanctuary, isn't it? I will definitely come back, and I've had a word about volunteering. Thank you, I'm so grateful. ”





## Artist Feedback

**"I enjoyed working with a more theatre-focused partner and developed an interesting way to merge poetry & script without pulling either of us into the other's art form."**

**"Seeing each piece in its home was special – both in terms of the performance and the reactions of the people from the garden."**

**"I learnt so much about the process from start to finish and also feeling so much more confident as myself as physical storyteller – as opposed to a spoken word performer, which feels very different. I'm excited to explore more in this space."**

**"I can see this model working so well in other places and with other communities. The model of mini shows rolled into one, all of which are inspired by spaces and places that share the same group of people or purpose."**







I have learnt a huge amount seeing how the gardens run and further confirmation of the wellbeing benefits gained when connecting art with the outdoors. I have gained confidence in both writing and devising which is already helping me as an artist. I hope that I have developed ways to gently encourage people out of their comfort zone whilst also pushing myself. It was wonderful seeing how everyone worked, having the opportunity to share each day and to have access to such talented minds!



# Learnings and Successes

**Word-of-mouth and print marketing are really important.** In an area where digital deprivation is significant, it was important not to rely solely on digital marketing to reach audiences and to connect with Bearwood's strong community networks. This requires a great deal of resource in terms of distribution and time.

**Access is a process which must be embedded in project planning stages.** Access and addressing engagement barriers was one of our priorities, so that everyone can engage with our work. Embedding access means that it is proactive, well thought out and artistically integrated. Working with a deaf artist encouraged us to address the access requirements needed and the effects to creative process and audiences.

**Culture can encourage pride in community spaces.** This project received really positive feedback from both the audiences and the gardens around feeling pride in their spaces. Some people had never visited the gardens before and were surprised that such vibrant spaces were on their doorstep.



**Communication with gardens is key.** We found that it was important to empower garden staff and volunteers to talk about the project and to communicate expectations to their local communities. Going forward, we will nurture these conversations further, and begin them earlier in the process.

**Visibility comes from hyper local marketing, such as word of mouth and distribution through gardens and local shops.** Equipping the gardens with physical and digital marketing materials helped to spread awareness and visibility within their local communities.

**Managing expectations is essential.** This kind of working model involves pieces being developed in a short frame of time, and research periods can be quick. It's crucial for us to manage expectations on scale of performance and keep channels of communications open for partners so that they feel involved and valued, being careful not to leave them feeling like we parachuted in and out.

**“Another highlight was having a hearing and Deaf audience to witness something special and that proved how hearing and Deaf artists can come together to perform. That was something great from this project as this showed that we all can come together from all backgrounds and walks of life and create a fantastic performance!”**





# Team

## Performers/ Devisers:

Brwn Girl in the Ring (Sophina Jagot)  
Emma Waterford  
Adrian B. Earle  
Ishtiaq Hussain  
Sam Frankie Fox  
Ricardo Santos Rocha  
Rochi Rampal  
Bohdan Piasecki  
Katy Rose Bennett

## Design and Production:

Abigail King  
Matt Lloyd, Infamous Arts  
Dean Whiskens

## BSL Interpreters:

Jamal Hussain  
Tanisha Hussain  
Aleesha Hussain  
Jacqueline Lewis  
Olivia Whitter

## Black Country Touring Team:

### Artistic Directors

Frances Land & Steve Johnstone

### Creative Producer

Sampira Al-Fihri

### Development Manager

Matt Andrews

### Company Manager

Corinne Morris

### Promoter Manager

Natalie Kidman

### Marketing & Comms Coordinator

Amrit Kaur Juss

### Community Programme Coordinator

Donna Clarkson

### Admin & Projects Assistant

Laura Leech

### Community Cinema Coordinator

Olivia James

### Business Admin Apprentice

Pardeep Sambhi

# Funders

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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

