



CANOLFAN MILENIWM CYMRU
WALES MILLENNIUM CENTRE



A YEAR IN REVIEW

2020-2021

WALES' NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE

We fire imaginations by creating our own theatre productions, festivals and digital experiences – as well as curating world-class, critically acclaimed touring productions – from musical theatre and comedy to dance and cabaret.

We ignite a passion for the arts with life-changing learning experiences and chances to shine in the spotlight.

We kindle emerging talents with our own fresh, provocative and popular productions, rooted in Welsh culture. We're also a charity, collaborating with organisations, communities and young people to make the arts accessible to everyone.

Every year we attract over 1.6 million visitors and generate £70 million for local businesses.

**WE ARE WALES MILLENNIUM CENTRE.
FIRE FOR THE IMAGINATION**

107,101

PEOPLE WATCHED GŴYL 2021

17,445

CUSTOMER ENQUIRIES DEALT
WITH VIA EMAIL

7 NEW EXHIBITIONS

VIEWED THROUGH OUR WINDOWS

2,962

YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGED WITH
THROUGH VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS

105 PEOPLE

WELCOMED TO THE BUTETOWN
CARNIVAL COMMUNITY PICNIC

PETER SWINBURN

Chair of Wales Millennium Centre



This was a unique year, and we all hope it remains so. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we had closed our doors on 17 March 2020 and all personal meetings stopped for over a year. We were in uncharted territory but understood that we had to be decisive and act quickly to navigate our way through this hugely challenging and unpredictable time.

With the cancellation of all shows and events, we lost 85% of our revenue overnight so by the summer, we had to reduce the size of the organisation to ensure Wales Millennium Centre survived. Funding from the Welsh Government's Cultural Recovery Fund enabled us to retain certain team members crucial to the business, but we remained under significant pressure.

During this time, we needed our imaginations fired more than ever and our remaining staff made every effort to ensure that our core charitable and community work continued. This was at a reduced level, but we managed to maintain contact with those who needed us most. This work was made possible thanks to generous support from the Arts Council of Wales, trusts and foundations, corporate members, individual donors, our members and the public.

A heartfelt diolch yn fawr to you all, to Wales Millennium Centre team past and present, to the Board and to our supporters, without whom we would not have survived.

MATHEW MILSOM

Managing Director



We closed our doors in March and had to take emergency measures to ensure our future survival through an ongoing period of uncertainty. We kept the flame of creativity alive by supporting our community partners, we moved our creative engagement online and supported our youth-led radio station, Radio Platform, to continue to broadcast.

We also took time to consider and refocus our future strategy, placing creativity and accessibility at the heart of everything we do which would allow us to thrive and flourish when we could reopen. We remain ambitious for the future, and have exciting capital and business improvement plans in place so that we can inspire the nation for generations to come.

I would like to thank Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales for their critical financial support during the period. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our wonderful staff, volunteers, trustees, partners and supporters for their unstinting support and commitment.

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

With our building closed and restrictions in place, we seized the opportunity to do things differently. Our vast windows became temporary galleries to incredible artwork from our friends and neighbours.

In August, we featured an art exhibition produced by a group of young artists as part of a competition by Mycelium, a project run by National Theatre Wales. In December, we featured a mural by Butetown artist, Kyle Legall.

In January, we showcased an exhibition of photography by Black, Asian and ethnically diverse young people from in and around Cardiff, in a project created by Yusuf Ismail, co-founder of Unify.

CELEBRATING TOGETHER

We continued to hold events so that we could stay connected with the community, albeit on a smaller scale than before. On Sunday 20 September, we held the Butetown Carnival Community Picnic with Butetown Arts and Culture Association, where a hundred people watched performances with mouth-watering Caribbean food from Good Food Cardiff.

Throughout October, we marked Black History Month with Black History 365 and, on 14 November, we hosted a day of Diwali celebrations led by our friends at Wales Tamil Sangham who created a beautiful Rangoli in our foyer.

"OUR OBJECTIVE WAS TO GIVE YOUNG ADULTS FROM OUR CITY THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND BE EXPOSED TO THE CREATIVE ARTS, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR BACKGROUND. WE HOPE TO BUILD ON THIS AND DO IT ON A LARGER SCALE IN THE FUTURE." YUSUF ISMAIL



SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE IN LOCKDOWN

"THIS COURSE HAS BEEN A REALLY GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR ME TO MEET OTHERS AND USE MY CREATIVITY TO ITS FULL EXTENT TO CREATE A STORY." LACEY

In order to continue supporting young people's creativity, we changed our creative learning programmes to be run remotely. As a result, we engaged with nearly 3,000 people, from areas and backgrounds that we've not managed to reach before.

TAKING PRODUCTION ONLINE

During lockdown, we supplied more portable equipment so the young people running Radio Platfform, our youth-led radio station, could broadcast from their bedrooms, family homes and even a caravan. The team explored new ways to reach their communities by producing a mixture of existing shows and new work, and in doing so put their organising and problem-solving skills to use.

By September we had moved our radio training course online, with participants able to gain Agored Cymru accreditation for the skills they learned remotely.

A NEW APPROACH

In September we also began to pilot our Creative Voice programme, designed to give young people the space and immersive support to explore their creativity in different artforms.

Aimed at 16–25-year-olds, the pilots covered filmmaking, radio production, and print and zine-making, all through the lens of storytelling. The courses were delivered by artists, designers and filmmakers, with mentors to support participants throughout.

Using the feedback from these pilot sessions, we ran further courses in February and March, covering creative writing, screen and film, and audio production. For many of the 86 young people who took part, it was the first time they'd engaged with us.

We've decided to continue with digital courses alongside physical courses to help us reach a wider range of young people.

SING PROUD CYMRU

Our choir for care-experienced children and young people continued to meet online, with a core group of around 20 young people meeting weekly for shorter sessions.

Many members found lockdown particularly challenging as the social aspect was such an important part of their sessions, but they all hugely valued the continued connection to other people who understand their unique circumstances.

The choir has been a great starting point for many, in both discovering a real passion for music and giving them the confidence to pursue it. We hope for some it will be the start of their creative journey with us.



OUR PRODUCTIONS

Although we couldn't perform on our stages this year, we continued to support artists and theatre-makers to produce and present online performances – as well as starting work on new staged productions.

We were thrilled that our critically acclaimed co-production of *The Beauty Parade* (March 2020) was named as one of Wales Arts Review's 'Best of 2020'.

In November we gave a warm croeso to Frân Wen, with whom we had the pleasure of developing a new, Welsh language co-production.

We also made spaces around our building available to artists wanting to create their own work. Even our car park became a creative space, with dancer and choreographer Matteo Marfoggia creating and rehearsing his latest two-hander, *Car Park Choreography*.



GŴYL 2021

Over one weekend in March, four of Wales' best-loved festivals – our own Festival of Voice, FOCUS Wales, Other Voices Cardigan and Aberystwyth Comedy Festival – joined forces to create Gŵyl 2021; a free, online festival packed with unforgettable music and comedy, embracing diversity and dialogue.

Captured over several months in Wales and across the world within Covid restrictions, it was available to watch live across the UK on BBC Wales' website.

Gŵyl was both a celebration of well-established artists and a discovery of the eclectic and emerging, from Wales and further afield. Festival of Voice's line-up included Cate Le Bon in collaboration with Gruff Rhys; an exclusive one-off performance by Brett Anderson, Charles Hazlewood and Paraorchestra; and performances curated by dance company Jukebox Collective.



ONLINE PRODUCTIONS

As we navigated new ways of working, we were delighted to introduce online productions from our friends across the UK, strengthening our relationships in the wider sector while continuing to offer our own audiences fresh new content of the very best quality.

In September, Dante or Die streamed a new immersive video podcast of User Not Found which took place in a nearby coffee shop on Bute Street in 2019.

Later that month, contemporary dance powerhouse Rambert produced a unique livestream performance of Draw from Within, made with leading choreographer and filmmaker, Wim Vandekeybus. Rambert's London South Bank studios were transformed into a series of contrasting, vivid theatrical worlds; some dream worlds, some nightmares and some turned upside down.

Our Christmas family show was the magical Raymond Briggs' Father Christmas, produced by Lyric Hammersmith and adapted by Pins and Needles in a digital partnership with Wales Millennium Centre. Audiences watched from the comfort of their own homes as Briggs' grumpy but loveable Father Christmas got ready for his busiest day of the year. The performance was available for free to schools and community groups thanks to support from our corporate members.



A VOICE FOR OUR SECTOR



The pandemic had a catastrophic effect on the arts industry, and the sector was quick to come together to campaign and fight for its very survival. From the day our doors closed, we spoke up for the arts in Wales on several platforms throughout the year, and we successfully lobbied the Welsh and UK Governments for further support.

Our Managing Director Mathew Milsom met with the Secretary of State for Wales and Cardiff's four MPs. Stephen Doughty MP went on to raise our case in the House of Commons, and Kevin Brennan MP highlighted our issues at a UK Parliament select committee meeting in June.

To show our support for the incredible freelancers upon whom the arts sector depends, we lit up our inscription on 6 July as part of the #LIGHTITINRED campaign, and in November we joined other major arts organisations to create and sponsor the Wales Freelance Taskforce.

We also made our voice heard in the press, with Artistic Director Graeme Farrow and our Trustee Dr Carol Bell interviewed on topics such as Covid passes and the need for emergency funding for arts organisations.

A HOME FOR EVERYONE

The troubling events this year made us, like many in the arts, consider how and why our organisation isn't as representative or as reflective of Wales as it should be.

We strive to tell stories and amplify diverse voices, on our stages and in all parts of our work and culture. We speak about the importance of the arts every day, but we must do more to encourage different people from a range of backgrounds to join us.

In October we published our Diversity Action Plan, outlining the steps we're taking to make our programme, our workplace and our building more inclusive and representative.

We also joined forces with other arts organisations to form the Wales, Culture and Race Task Force, focusing on improving accountability and opportunities for Black, Asian and ethnically diverse people in the arts.

This is just the start of our journey. We'll continue our work to drive an understanding of the need for change at all levels.



CROESO CYNNES CYMRAEG

As the national arts centre, the Welsh language and culture are at the heart of what we do.

During our closure, we continued to provide an excellent bilingual experience for all our customers, visitors and staff. As of March 2021, 3,999 of our customers had set Welsh as their chosen language for our communications, while we kept in touch with a further 1,951 in both languages.

Our employees are offered free Welsh courses at varying levels and as of the end of this year, 44% of our staff had some level of Welsh.

While we were closed we made sure to remind staff of our bilingual customer service

commitments, and we provided insight to the Welsh Language Commissioner on the impact of the pandemic on our Welsh language provision.

Enabling artists to create new narratives and tell their story in their first language is vital to the cultural life of Wales and core to our artistic vision. While our stages were dark, we worked behind the scenes developing Anthem, our new Welsh language musical comedy opening in March 2022.



WE ARE EXTREMELY PROUD THAT OUR 7.5-ACRE CAMPUS IS HOME TO EIGHT OTHER CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS, ALL OF WHICH CONTRIBUTE GREATLY TO THE VIBRANCY, ACCESSIBILITY AND ARTISTIC IMPACT OF THE BUILDING. OVER 1,000 PEOPLE ARE EMPLOYED ON OUR SITE ACROSS ALL OUR ORGANISATIONS.

OUR CULTURAL CAMPUS



WELSH NATIONAL OPERA stages large scale opera and concerts and conducts outreach work across Wales, in major cities in England and internationally. They provide inspirational experiences for people of all ages and backgrounds in our communities, nurture young operatic talent and show future generations that opera is a rewarding, relevant and universal art form.



LITERATURE WALES is the national company for the development of literature. Its vision is a Wales where literature empowers, improves and brightens lives and it works to inspire communities, develop writers and celebrate the literary culture of Wales. Literature Wales works in Welsh, English and bilingually across Wales.



HIJINX is one of Europe's leading inclusive theatre companies, creating outstanding performances with learning disabled and/or autistic artists on stage and on screen, for Wales and for the world.



URDD GOBAITH CYMRU is a national voluntary youth organisation with over 55,000 members between the ages of eight and 25. They provide a range of experiences for children and young people in Wales including residential, cultural and sporting opportunities, all through the medium of Welsh.



TŶ CERDD's mission is to promote and celebrate the music of Wales – they believe that if you're making music in Wales, it's Welsh music. They work with professionals and non-professionals, music-creators and performers, to bring the music of Wales to audiences at home and further afield.



NATIONAL DANCE COMPANY WALES makes dance with all kinds of people in all kinds of places. Through innovation and imagination, they widen the spectrum of what dance can be so audiences can make, watch, participate in and learn about dance in Wales and across the world.



BBC NATIONAL ORCHESTRA OF WALES
For over 90 years BBC National Orchestra of Wales has played an integral part in the cultural landscape of Wales, occupying a distinctive role as both a broadcast and national symphony orchestra.



TOUCH TRUST is a pioneering charity providing inclusive, creative, movement and multisensory sessions for adults and children with a variety of multisensory needs, learning disabilities and ASD.

3,2,1... ACTION!

Closing our doors for public performances gave us an opportunity to support Welsh national media, by allowing TV crews to film popular programmes in our iconic building. Among the highlights were the BBC's Doctor Who and Keeping Faith, and Netflix's Havoc, starring Tom Hardy and Forest Whittaker.



In November, S4C's current affairs programme Pawb a'i Farn – one of Betsan Powys' first episodes as its presenter – was broadcast live from the Glanfa. In March, the iconic Cân i Gymru competition – one of the cornerstones of S4C's annual output – was broadcast live from the Donald Gordon Theatre, attracting its largest audience in fifteen years.

"CÂN I GYMRU IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF S4C'S SCHEDULE EVERY YEAR AND TO SHOWCASE THE COMPETITION ON THE FAMOUS DONALD GORDON THEATRE STAGE IS VERY SPECIAL – CERTAINLY THE PERFECT DUO!"
ELEN RHYS, S4C ENTERTAINMENT COMMISSIONER

DIOLCH

A loss of £20m of our revenue this year alone was so large, it threatened our very existence. Financial support from Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) ensured that we could not only maintain our building and retain as many staff as possible, but also prepare to safely reopen again when the time came. We would not have been able to survive without it.

We received two Stabilisation Fund grants – £50,000 from Welsh Government in May and £175,000 from ACW in June – to cover essential business costs as the pandemic took hold.

In June, we were very grateful to receive £3.9m from ACW's Covid Cultural Recovery Fund. This included £3.4m of revenue funding to protect essential staff roles and to rebuild our organisation. It also allowed us to work with freelance creatives and individual artists, which led to us launching our first ever Creative Associates programme. The remaining capital funding helped make our building ready to reopen – including installing WiFi in our public spaces to allow us to automate purchases and reduce contact, installing a new point of sale system, setting up temperature check points, and an additional 36 seats in the Donald Gordon Theatre to be offered to community groups.

A heartfelt diolch yn fawr to our individual donors, trusts and foundations, members and corporate supporters, without whom we could not have continued our work with young people and communities at a time when they needed us most.

Continued support from the Moondance Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Simon Gibson Charitable Trust, John Thaw Foundation and the Clive and Sylvia Richards charity was essential to our ongoing community and learning work.

Alongside support from the Welsh Government's Major Events Unit and the British Council, additional grants from ACW and the National Lottery allowed us to create Gŵyl 2021.

Our individual and corporate members remained hugely supportive, and Admiral agreed to become part of this group this year.

Individual support allowed us to continue developing our own productions; for this we are incredibly grateful to Bob and Lindsay Clark, Peter and Jan Swinburn and Dr Carol Bell.

Every donation made a real difference and changed lives for the better in Wales. For more information on how to join this group: wmc.org.uk/join-and-give

THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

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LIFE PRESIDENT

The Lord Rowe-Beddoe DL

CHAIR'S CIRCLE

Dr Carol Bell

Bob + Lindsay Clark

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