

## **STRATFORD ARTS TRUST – THE CHARITY THAT RUNS STRATFORD CIRCUS ANNOUNCES PLANS TO WIND UP**

Stratford Arts Trust (SAT) has announced its intention to wind-up alongside a legacy programme which will ensure continued benefit for local communities.

The difficult decision to wind up SAT has been taken by the charity's board of trustees. After leaving its building last year the team have been working closely with Arts Council England to determine its future operating model. However, Arts Council considered that SAT's new plans varied too greatly from the original funding agreement and decided to withdraw SAT's National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) grant.

Without an NPO grant the Board have decided that the future of its work will be best served by focussing on enabling some of its projects to thrive independently of the Trust. This will ensure that the impact SAT has had over the past decade will continue after it winds up in November 2021.

Since 2011 SAT has annually delivered over 300 accessible and affordable creative performances and educational activities to 135,000 people. SAT has offered a wide variety of productions and classes including theatre, dance, music, arts, creative writing, and circus performances catering for everyone.

Our community has always been at the heart of how we think and how we work. We have given our local diverse communities of East London access to the highest quality art and artists in this country and internationally. We have commissioned and worked with artists and companies including 20 Stories High, Akram Khan Company, Ambreen Razia, Amina Jama, BTL Jazz, East London Dance, Face Front Inclusive Theatre, Fevered Sleep, Fingersmiths, Frozen Light Theatre, Fuel, High Rise Theatre, Inua Ellams, Libby Liburd, Little Angel Theatre, Living Song, Newham Music, Oily Cart Theatre, Opera Up Close, Protein Dance, Upswing Aerial, Yellow Earth Theatre & Zest Theatre to name but a few.

**Georgina Philippou, Chair, Stratford Arts Trust, commented:**

*"This decision was made after we examined all options for continuing to operate, and we hope that by winding up now, we will be able to put in place a successful legacy programme, that will continue to support and provide arts to our communities for many years to come.*

*"I wish to thank Lucy and her dedicated team for continuing to work so hard for our communities. They have been inspirational to all of us, and I know they will all go on to continue delivering real impact whatever they do after leaving SAT. We owe them a great deal."*

**Lucy Atkinson, Interim CEO, Stratford Arts Trust, commented:**

*“For over 10 years SAT has always put the needs of its communities first and we will continue to do this as we wind-up. Despite the challenges we have faced over the last 18 months, SAT is financially solvent with an experienced and enthusiastic staff team. Making the decision to close down such an organisation was not an easy one. But, when we weighed up the options, it was clear that while we could continue our work in the short to medium term, the long-term future for some of our programmes would be better served by finding other organisations to take them on. I applaud our Board in making the tough decision to wind-up the organisation while ensuring that funding is in place to enable some of our local partners to prosper and continue to inspire and transform lives. While everyone in the team feels an intense sense of loss, we are heartened by the knowledge that the communities we’ve served will continue to benefit from our work.*”

*“I also want to thank all the staff and supporters for their dedication to every aspect of our world – it’s truly been a privilege to work with you all.”*

**Tonya Nelson, London Area Director, Arts Council England said:**

*“The Arts Council worked closely with Stratford Arts Trust when it had to vacate its premises last year. Unfortunately, without the arts centre, the organisation was no longer capable of delivering the core programmes that formed the basis of its National Portfolio funding agreement.*”

*“Stratford Arts Trust has decided to wind up and has begun this process to cease its activities. The Arts Council values the work Stratford Arts Trust has done with communities, young people, families and schools. We pay tribute to the organisation and its staff who have delivered a huge variety of work and inspired audiences through its many world-class performances.”*

All the team at Stratford Arts Trust want to thank everyone who attended performances, participated in our workshops and classes over the years. The artists, companies, partners, funders, the volunteers, and community groups who shared their experiences, expertise, and time, all of whom have been a part of this very special journey and we have had the great pleasure to know and work alongside. More information on our legacy programme will be announced in the autumn.

**-ENDS-**

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## Notes to Editors

### About Stratford Arts Trust

Since 2011, Stratford Arts Trust has worked to offer creative experiences to the people of Newham and East London, from early years to older adults, young people and groups less likely to have access to the arts through joyful, life-affirming activities. Stratford Arts Trust's mission is to inspire and develop local talent in collaboration with the best artists in the United Kingdom and internationally.

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