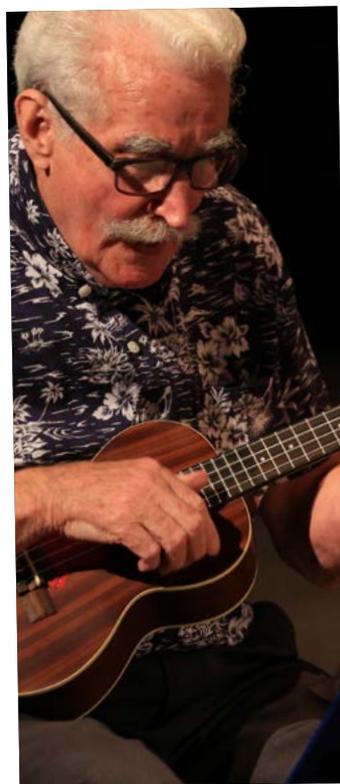


Late Opening:

Arts and Older People in Scotland



Andrew Eaton-Lewis

Commissioned jointly by The Baring Foundation and Luminare, Scotland's creative ageing organisation. Funded by The Baring Foundation

About the Baring Foundation

The Baring Foundation is an independent grant maker, founded in 1969. Its purpose is to tackle discrimination and disadvantage through strengthening civil society, in the UK and abroad. The Foundation's arts programme since 2010 has focused on older people.

About Luminare

Luminare, Scotland's creative ageing organisation, aims to ensure that older people across Scotland have access to high quality arts and activities, whatever their circumstances and wherever they live. Its programme of creative events and projects is designed to support the development of arts practice with, for and by older people. This includes a nationwide creative ageing festival which has run annually since Luminare was set up in 2012.

About the author

Andrew Eaton-Lewis was group arts editor of The Scotsman and Scotland on Sunday until 2014. He now freelances in various capacities while working part-time as Arts Lead for the Mental Health Foundation, supporting arts projects that address mental health and developing new work for the annual Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival. He can be contacted via andreweatonlewis.wordpress.com

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I am very grateful to the numerous people who gave up their time to be interviewed for this publication, in person, by phone and by email, for all the inspiring thoughts and fascinating information they sent me, and all the helpful feedback they offered on my first draft. It was – sadly but inevitably – impossible to include everything, just as it was impossible to include every project in Scotland that is concerned with older people accessing the arts. The purpose of this publication is to provide an overview, across various art forms and geographical areas, rather than an exhaustive report, and I hope that I have succeeded in this. (Any mistakes, I should point out, are my own.) I am particularly grateful to Anne Gallacher of Luminare, for all her guidance and suggestions.

On a personal note, this publication was written at a difficult time for me, just as my mother Alison was in the final stages of dementia; she died on 5 September 2017, aged 83. I am full of admiration for all the people – some of whom are profiled on these pages – who are doing such amazing and innovative things to support people with dementia, as well as their carers and families.

Andrew Eaton-Lewis, 15 September 2017



**The Baring
Foundation**

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Scottish Ballet Regenerate
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“The arts can help people take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing in ways that will be crucial to the health of the nation”



Dancers from PRIME
at Dive Cabaret © Brian Hartley

Introduction

Right now there are numerous projects across Scotland that are, in diverse and sometimes groundbreaking ways, supporting older people in engaging with the arts. The purpose of this publication is to collect some of their stories in one place – and to speculate on whether these various stories actually amount to one story, bigger than the sum of its parts. Does the combined work of these projects amount to a significant cultural change in Scotland? And if so, how is it possible to build on this?

There are various reasons why such a cultural shift is timely and important, in Scotland and beyond. Firstly, the number of older people in our society is increasing significantly. As noted in **Future of an Ageing Population**¹, a report commissioned in 2016 by the UK government, 70% of UK population growth until 2039 will consist of people over 60, an increase from 14.9 million to 21.9 million people. The Scottish government's own most recent figures show that the number of people aged 65 and over will have increased by 53% between the years 2014 and 2039 (www.gov.scot)². Meanwhile,

Scottish Household Survey data shows that, between 2012 and 2015, attendance and participation in arts events increased across all age groups over 45 – and, most notably, by 9 per cent among those aged 75 and over. However there is still much work to be done – the oldest age band still demonstrated a far lower level of engagement in cultural activity in 2015 than any other.

Secondly, there is a growing evidence base that the arts are good for our health. **Creative Health: The Arts For Health and Wellbeing**³, a report published in July 2017 by the UK government's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (APPGAHW), presented a persuasive case that the arts help people recover from illness, live longer and more fulfilled lives, and also save money in health and social services. The many examples it offers include Artlift, an 'arts on prescription' service in Gloucestershire and



Glad Café © Eoin Carey



Janice Parker workshop
at Cove Park © Eoin Carey



“ The doors of perception were kicked open quite widely during the 1960s and 70s and a lot of people haven’t closed those doors ”

Wiltshire, which found that after six months of working with an artist, participants had 37 per cent less demand for GP appointments and their need for hospital admissions dropped by 27 per cent. Former UK arts minister Alan Howarth told reporters following the report's publication that the arts "can help people take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing in ways that will be crucial to the health of the nation."

The implications for the health of older people in particular are obvious – and the APPGAHW findings are supported by statistics and anecdotal evidence from several projects highlighted in this publication. To pick just one example, Craft Café in Govan engaged 72 people aged over 60 in weekly creative activities during 2016 and 2017. It found that 96% of participants reported improvements in their physical or mental health, and a feeling of being more socially connected; 92% reported feeling greater stability in their lives. 100% of participants said the experience improved their confidence.

Thirdly, this older population has a creative, cultural, political and economic power that should not be underestimated. "I think there are a lot of ways in which society tries to close people down and make them slightly embarrassed about being older," says Morag Deyes, artistic director of Dance Base and founder of PRIME, a dance company for people over 60. "I think we're at a fascinating turning point. The doors of perception were kicked open quite widely during the 1960s and



70s and a lot of people haven't closed those doors – this particular generation of older people, who are in their 60s and 70s now, have a completely different mindset from the decade before that, and there's a creativity in that sense of freedom. Even more fascinating is how it will progress in the next ten to 15 years, when the ageing population will not be from the permissive 1960s generation but from the punk era. What kind of art and creativity will come out of that?"

In short, there are all kinds of benefits to be gained from engaging more older people in the arts, as artists, audiences and participants. Taken together, the current activity in Scotland amounts to a powerful demonstration of how this can be achieved.

One of the most high profile projects covered in this report is Luminare, an annual, nationwide programme with hundreds of events across Scotland devoted to celebrating 'creative ageing'. As described in more detail in the case study on page 23, Luminare is increasingly taking on an advocacy role on behalf of artists and artistic projects across the country.

Luminate's launch in 2012 was supported by Creative Scotland, who were concerned by Scottish Arts Council research suggesting that engagement with the arts reduces as we get older, and the Baring Foundation, which has been supporting creative work with older people across the UK since 2010. The two organisations have continued to support the festival, along with Age Scotland. As Luminare director Anne Gallacher says: "Funders play a strategic role. A lot of the dementia friendly work that is growing in Scotland, for example, would not be happening without the Life Changes Trust." Indeed, two such projects are profiled in this report – Forget Me Not in Edinburgh, and Arora on the Isle of Lewis. The Baring Foundation's support for Luminare is part of its own strategic approach to support arts and ageing work across the UK.

Increasingly, Luminare is playing a strategic role itself. In commissioning this report with the Baring Foundation, and by launching it as part of its 2017 festival programme, Luminare wishes to highlight the variety, innovation, and cultural importance of the work being

done across Scotland with the arts and older people, with the primary aim of ensuring that such activity continues to find support. It is, in some ways, a manifesto.

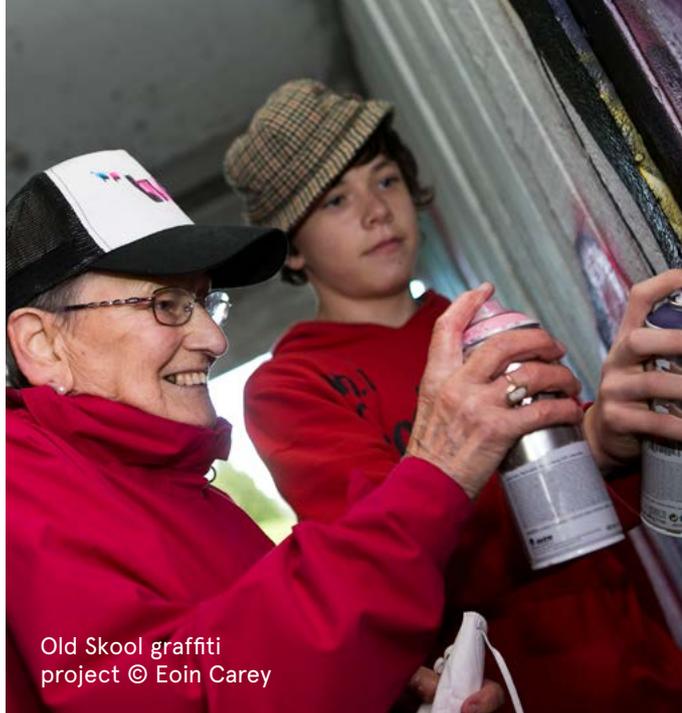
While much of the work described in this report is primarily focused on the demonstrable health benefits of the arts – such as the frequently observed ability of music, art and storytelling to trigger memories in people with dementia – a common theme is that the artistic quality of the work is also of crucial importance. Carol Main of Live Music Now emphasises that "artistic integrity is absolutely the bottom line" in all her organisation's projects. John McNaught, of Highland Print Studio, makes a point of saying that the men over 50 who participate in the studio's free 'Wise Guys' printmaking sessions use the same high quality materials as professional artists, and that "we're not going to exhibit anything substandard". Morag Deyes makes similar points about PRIME – not everyone makes it through the auditions.



Scottish Opera's Spinning Songs © Iain Percy



DCA © Erika Stevenson



Old Skool graffiti project © Eoin Carey

This is important, because the success of the projects described in this report is largely due to the skill, experience, professionalism and artistry of the people running them, and it would be a mistake to think such success can be replicated without taking this into account. This is noted, for example, in the conclusion to the 2014 **evaluation report**⁴ for Living Voices, a series of storytelling, music and poetry sessions in care settings across Aberdeen, South Ayrshire, and Perth and Kinross. Factors considered to be “absolutely critical to the success of the Living Voices model” include professional artists “skilled in using multiple and combined art forms to meet participant needs”, the role of a centralised project manager, and the fact that it was run by two national arts organisations, which “brought authority and credibility to the programme”.



Craft Café
© Eoin Carey

This, of course, means that none of this work necessarily comes cheap. The financial support of the Baring Foundation, Life Changes Trust, and numerous other trusts and foundations in recent years has made all kinds of things possible, as the case studies in this report demonstrate, but at the time of writing the majority of the projects featured here are seeking new sources of funding in order to continue or to expand on their work so far. A crucial question, then, is how does this work survive and thrive going forward? It’s a question I will explore in more detail in the concluding chapter of this publication.

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- 1 Future of an Ageing Population:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-of-an-ageing-population>
 - 2 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities/DataGrid/Age/AgePopMig>
 - 3 Creative Arts: The Arts For Health and Wellbeing:
<http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/>
 - 4 [http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Executive Summary Living Voices Evaluation.pdf](http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Executive%20Summary%20Living%20Voices%20Evaluation.pdf)



Live Music Now, in the words of its long-time Scottish director Carol Main, “is about getting music to people who wouldn’t normally access it”. Or, in the words of the charity’s co-founder, violinist Yehudi Menuhin: “It has been my dream to bring music back into the lives of those people whose lives are especially prone to stress and suffering... so that it might comfort, heal and bring delight.”

LMN’s programmes for older people include live music sessions in hospitals, hospices, and care homes; for the **LMN Musicians in Residence** programme, groups of musicians selected in consultation with care staff make regular visits to a care home over the course of around three months, gradually getting to know the residents through participatory sessions that combine live performance with discussion and reminiscence. Feedback from participants is that they feel “happier, more stimulated and less lonely”.

In 2013, though, LMN Scotland embarked on what Main calls “a completely new and untested concept” – **Composing with Care**, a project for Luminare in which older people in the Hebrides (in residential care or via island lunch clubs) contributed to the creation of a brand new suite of songs by composer William Sweeney, inspired by Hebridean culture and the residents’ personal stories and memories.

“We thought the inner Hebridean islands, with all their rich heritage and Gaelic language,

could give us source material for a new piece of music,” recalls Main. And so two musicians, accordionist Gary Innes and clarsach player Jennifer Port, visited Islay, Skye, Mull, Iona and Tiree, creating participatory performances with older people living in isolated areas – many of whom had never seen a classically trained duo before – and recording them as they sang and shared stories. Over the project, 24 concerts took place across 12 venues, for 250 people, and five new pieces of music were commissioned. “On Islay there was a woman with dementia who had been quite withdrawn,” recalls Main. “She started to sing a song in Gaelic and bit by bit she became more confident – Bill used that whole song.”

The experience, she says, “was a bit of a learning curve”. Many musicians involved had never performed on the Inner Hebrides before, and one had never sung in Gaelic (LMNS Scotland alumna Mary Ann Kennedy, Main says, was a source of support). It also generated far more material – songs, reminiscences, social history – than it was possible to use. But it was successful enough for the model to be repeated over several subsequent projects.

The following year, John Maxwell Geddes was commissioned to create *A Castle Mills Suite*, a piece of music drawing on stories from the Castle Mills rubber factory in Edinburgh, which once employed 9000 people. “A lot of

those people were decanted to social housing in Sighthill, so we went there, and to Wester Hailes,” says Main. “There are all sorts of local references in the piece – we found a woman who was 103 who had actually worked at the plant. John wrote a very moving piece of music for mezzo-soprano and piano.”

Another project saw folk singers Robyn Stapleton and Claire Hastings collaborating with residents of care homes on *Songs From Above and Below*, a piece composed by John McLeod based on former mine workers’ stories. McLeod, 83 this year, and LMN musicians visited ten care settings, five in West Lothian and five in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales – two areas linked by a shared mining heritage. The piece was performed in 2015 at the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff and the Edinburgh Fringe, as well as the care and day centres which took part in the project. It’s always important, Main says, “that we’re giving the music back to the people who gave the material to us.”

On the day we meet, Main has just returned from Paisley, where she was listening to a work-in-progress by composer and clarsach player Savourna Stevenson, inspired by reminiscences about Paisley’s famous mills and created, once again, in collaboration with local people in care homes and day centres. “At the end a woman in the audience said, ‘I thought that there were lots of voices speaking to me, Savourna.’” Stevenson’s music, featuring elements of jazz and Spanish guitar, is all instrumental, “so the concept

works even though there aren’t words to tell the stories”.

“I tend to say that we are music in the community but we are not community music,” says Main. “It’s a subtle difference but it’s critical in how it reflects what comes out at the other end. Artistic integrity is absolutely the bottom line.” Indeed, pieces created via Composing with Care have already been performed at the Usher Hall, Scottish Arts Club and the Scottish Music Centre, and disseminated more widely via Live Music Now’s own networks. “Because Live Music Now exists internationally there can be exchanges of scores with musicians from abroad,” says Main. “What I’d really like to see is other organisations, or branches of Live Music Now, taking on this model.”

 www.livemusicnow.org.uk



© Rachel Keenan



“ We’re giving the music back to the people who gave the material to us ”

Highland Print Studio

“My view is that anyone can draw,” says John McNaught, studio manager at Highland Print Studio in Inverness. “People have a view that they have to be able to draw like Raphael or Leonardo, whereas it’s just a form of communication.”

Since 2011, McNaught has been showing men they can draw - and communicate - with **Wise Guys**, a remarkably successful free printmaking workshop for men over 50. The Wise Guys have been interviewed by BBC Radio Scotland and Elaine C Smith for her *Burdz Eye View* STV show, visited by Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop, and will soon have their work exhibited in the Scottish Parliament.

It’s an impressive achievement given that the project grew out of research by **Age UK**⁵ showing that older men don’t take part in

social activities to the same extent as women, and are therefore at risk of loneliness. In McNaught’s own previous experiences of running print classes for older people, he says, “99% were women. I can remember one man.”

And so, six years ago, Highland Print Studio set out to address this, helped by funding from Age Scotland and High Life Highland. “The feeling was that if we put on a class of watercolour painting it wouldn’t have worked but that printmaking, being technical as well as artistic, might be a way in,” recalls McNaught. After the project got local press coverage, McNaught recalls, “we were completely inundated.”

Wise Guys participants visited the studio one morning a week, learning a range of printmaking techniques including linocut, etching and screen-printing, using a mixture



of traditional machinery and skills. "This is quite a low population area but none of them knew each other at all," McNaught observes. This soon changed with the help of social evenings at which participants could share what they had been working on, and listen to talks by professional artists – who, McNaught says, would face "a barrage of questions, reflecting a lifetime of experience".

"You couldn't engineer this but it became very sociable. We had an anaesthetist, a Free Church minister, a retired crofter, a whole variety of jobs, and yet it was just terrific. You bring up some technique and topic and someone will say, 'I've done that years ago.'" A Canadian man who attended the workshops turned out to have been an animator for Disney. "We had this fantastic discussion about trimming something on a guillotine, which kicked off a half hour discussion about the Scottish engineering term of a bawhair. He just loved all that."

For all the banter, McNaught emphasises the hard work and dedication involved. "The teaching is relaxed but they use the same materials as professional artists. We find that if you give people really good materials and equipment suddenly the work is so much better. We're not going to exhibit anything substandard because that doesn't do anyone any good. The feeling of pride is important."

5 [https://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Research/Age UK Evidence Review on Loneliness July 2014.pdf](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Research/Age%20UK%20Evidence%20Review%20on%20Loneliness%20July%202014.pdf)

To date, around 30 men have been involved in Wise Guys. Many have continued to use the studio since – two are on its board of directors. One, Jim Stewart, went on to help set up a Men's Shed in Beaulay (based on the international Men's Shed movement to create spaces with a positive impact on men's health), which now has 40 members.

The Studio is currently seeking new sources of funding so the project can not only continue but expand. McNaught says he is keen to reach out to men from more deprived areas. "We're discussing all sorts of things," says McNaught, "like existing Wise Guys mentoring new ones."

Those who enthuse about the experience include Terry Henderson, who says: "I'm so glad to have discovered a brand new interest with like-minded people. I have every intention of joining the Studio as a member as I'd miss it too much."

 highlandprintstudio.co.uk



“Residents were suddenly firing up about a poem or a song they hadn’t thought about in a long time”



Living Voices, as described in its June 2014 evaluation report, “draws on the rich culture of spoken word in Scotland, particularly the participative form of the ceilidh”. That’s ceilidh in the simplest sense of a ‘social visit’ rather than a noisy dance party – an event where people gather to talk, sing, and generally spend convivial time together.

Initiated by the Scottish Poetry Library in partnership with the Scottish Storytelling Centre, Living Voices began as an 18-month pilot in care settings across Aberdeen, South Ayrshire, and Perth and Kinross, in which professional artists (storytellers, poets and musicians) led monthly sessions with five to 14 older people at a time.

Lilias Fraser, projects manager for the Scottish Poetry Library, describes two factors that were of key importance to these sessions. Firstly, that they “gave people the impetus to have a conversation”. Previous spoken word projects with older people had identified, as the same report puts it, “an absence of creativity, stimulation and human connection in many care settings”. But during Living Voices’ interactive sessions, Fraser says, residents “were suddenly firing up about a poem or a song they hadn’t thought about in a long time”. One care worker interviewed for the report describes “a huge impact on residents who participate.... They’re more relaxed, they have better morale and they are more talkative”.

The second factor was that sessions used different forms of storytelling, including songs and poems, and both group activity and one-to-one conversations. “It gives you a range of tools,” says Fraser, “and some people are bound to respond to one more than the other. It gives people more ways to join in the conversation.” This “change of intensity”, as Fraser describes it, seems to have been the key to Living Voices’ success, as poet Ken Cockburn, who took part in the pilot and was joint co-ordinator of the latest phase, describes. “I’m used to presenting poetry but I found song very effective, people with dementia responded to that often more directly and joined in. And it was interesting to see the kinds of stories that would hold people’s attention. I gradually got a sense of the kinds of things that worked and didn’t work.”

Sessions would begin with a meet and greet, then a performance and group conversation, followed by one-on-one “wind down” interaction. “The group section was important but the bits on either side were equally important,” says Cockburn, “because there were some people who were just more comfortable speaking one to one. You would get people talk about aspects of their lives they hadn’t talked about before.”

The response to Living Voices has been overwhelmingly positive, not only in terms of its impact on residents but also in terms of the morale of families and care home workers, who report increased job satisfaction – but also say that having sessions run by professionals, rather than attempting something similar themselves, was very important. “We've learned that if we could offer a session for free or heavily subsidised, our hands would be bitten off all over the country,” says Fraser. The problem is the cost of working in such an intensive way with relatively small groups of older people (although Living Voices was reaching a significant number – 140 a month). “It's been quite difficult to find funding streams that will give money to that direct provision,” says Cockburn.

And so Living Voices has evolved, for now, into a training programme, initially for care workers and, most recently, librarians – in the hope, as Cockburn puts it, of “creating a cascade effect”.

“In this third phase we're giving librarians techniques to work with older people,” he explains. “In some ways that work is going on already but the provision varies greatly across the country and people have different levels of experience.” Cockburn mentions Aberdeen, where a mobile library has developed image-based sessions, “but they hadn't looked so much at poetry, storytelling and song so we're looking at ways to extend those visual sessions.” In Perth and Kinross,

meanwhile, volunteers are already visiting care homes with resource boxes prepared by libraries. “What we were doing there was to try to build on that, and allow librarians and volunteers to find materials themselves and draw on personal stories as well.” He describes a training session where storyteller Claire Hewitt described a knitting pattern her mother had used “but then talked about how she had constructed that story. In the telling it sounds improvised but it was made quite deliberately.”

“The thing that came out of the first phase that I didn't expect was the social aspect,” says Fraser. “We were thinking about the one-to-one connections but we hadn't really noticed until it came up in the study the number of times people said ‘this has made us talk to each other’ or improved connections with carers. It's difficult to put a price on that but it seems that's of real value to people, particularly in care settings.”

“I think the thing I enjoyed most was going into care homes,” says Cockburn. “Working directly with people and listening to them open up was very rewarding. Something similar happens in the training – people realise they maybe do have a story to tell and that people will be interested.”

 www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk

Playlist for Life, Andy Lowndes says, “is the best thing I’ve ever done”. One of the charity’s three founding trustees – along with Scottish writer and broadcaster Sally Magnusson, and Dr Gianna Cassidy, a music psychologist at Glasgow Caledonian University – Lowndes is a retired psychiatric nurse who worked with people living with dementia for many years. However he says that, while he was proud of much of that work, he often questioned its effectiveness. “With this, I’ve seen people changed,” he says. “I’ve seen people’s lives improved.”

Playlist for Life uses carefully selected music to help trigger memories for people living with dementia. Founded in 2013, it was inspired by Sally Magnusson’s experience of caring for her mother, Mamie, who had dementia – a story Magnusson tells in her 2014 book *Where Memories Go: Why Dementia Changes Everything*. Magnusson discovered that, even when Mamie was no longer able to hold a conversation, she could still connect with her mother through songs – lullabies, folk songs, hymns – that had played an important role in Mamie’s life.

“There’s an increasing body of research recognising that music is special neurologically,” says Lowndes. “Music influences the activity in so many parts of the brain. We describe it as a fireworks display going off when people listen to music. If you brain scan somebody you see this fireworks display happening.”

The key is finding music that is personally meaningful to an individual, which is where Playlist for Life can help with tips and resources. For example, Lowndes says, a good place to start is music people may have formed a connection to during the period in their lives psychologists call **the reminiscence bump**⁶. “Between the ages of 10 and 25 we lay down more memories than any other time in our lives. Many of these memories have songs attached to them. And the brain’s pre frontal cortex, where autobiographical memory and emotion come together, is the last part of the brain to be assaulted by Alzheimer’s.”

In other words, as dementia advances and memories retreat, a piece of music connected to those memories can help to retrieve them and the feelings attached. Playlist for Life works with carers, families, and people in the early stages of dementia to identify the key pieces of music that should be included on each individual’s personal playlist. For example, Lowndes says, “We can find out what music might be relevant to a Bangladeshi woman who came to the UK in the 1970s by looking for possible Bangladeshi folk songs, TV themes of the 80s.”

The results can be transformative – a short film on Playlist for Life’s website tells the story of a man in a care home called Harry, who had been withdrawn and unresponsive until he began listening to a music playlist

with his wife Margaret, after which he began talking and interacting with her again. “The music is important but the tagged memories are important too,” says Lowndes. “It gives a family member or care worker the unique individual sitting in front of them,” he says. “We might have the same music but the memories will be different.”

Lowndes has taken on the role of ‘music detective’, offering advice via a blog and other resources on Playlist for Life’s website, and talking to hundreds of people per month about the charity’s work. “Last year we trained about 1400 people – professionals, carers – on how to do Playlist for Life based on best practice and everything we’ve gathered,” he says. The charity is currently developing a community hub model, working with existing organisations, such as churches, to spread word further, and has also been working with Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the Care Inspectorate in Scotland to monitor its progress in making playlists a “mainstream intervention rather than a niche within a charity”.

Early intervention is key, Lowndes says – as is encouraging people to make their own playlists. “Our ambition over the next two years is really about raising awareness. In

Scotland alone, about 1600 people a month are diagnosed with dementia, which could be under-reported. Our ambition from that point of view is that it’s not late in your journey that you start to use Playlist for Life, but at the point of diagnosis. And the demographic that develops dementia is going to change over time – we’re going to launch a Playlist for Life app which will initially be available through IOS and Spotify.”

What the charity doesn’t plan to do is grow into a big organisation. “Our ambition isn’t to have an office in every town and have to chase money just to keep going,” says Lowndes. “Our grand ambition is to no longer be needed in five years’ time, and actually close the charity down. We hope that this becomes mainstream – every student nurse, every occupational therapist, and training at graduate level.”

 www.playlistforlife.org.uk



6 <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/cusp/201210/the-reminiscence-bump>

When care staff and artists work together effectively, the results can have a transformative effect on older people, as projects like Arora, Living Voices and Composing with Care (all profiled elsewhere in this publication) demonstrate. However it is not always obvious how to create these partnerships. This is where the Care Inspectorate's **Arts in Care** resource pack comes in.

"There was a recognition that professional artists can make a real impact on the quality of creative arts in care and it was seen that something needed to happen to raise the profile of this," explains Edith Macintosh, head of improvement support for the Care Inspectorate. "The purpose of the pack is to provide a starting point for care staff in order for them to run creative arts sessions, stimulate creative thinking and evidence the outcomes from it. It also provides an opportunity to share good practice and ideas."

The pack, created in partnership with Luminate and supported by Creative Scotland and available via the Care Inspectorate website, includes a documentary film focusing on the difference arts projects have made to three care homes, 'recipe cards' created by artists for care staff with ideas and methods for creating participatory sessions across five different art forms (dance, poetry, singing, print-making and salt dough) and tips on how best to work with artists.

The pack, Macintosh says, has proved useful both to care workers (in one instance, using the dough card quickly prompted one service to invite a potter into the care home) and to artists, who, she observes, "have said the pack enabled them to have a conversation at a care service when previously it had been difficult".

"It's important not to over complicate things," says Macintosh, "to keep resources simple and straight forward and use stories to teach, inspire and influence. Both care professionals and professional artists have to appreciate one another's roles and perspectives in order to see success."

 hub.careinspectorate.com





“ Something as simple as making language a bit clearer can have a massive influence on people’s confidence ”

Dementia Friendly Initiatives

Across Scotland, arts projects are having a quietly transformative effect on people living with dementia – sometimes in unexpected ways. “We’ve found that the arts are another form of language,” says Paula Brown of **Arora**, a project run by An Lanntair on the Isle of Lewis, before sharing a story about a woman with dementia who rediscovered her operatic singing voice, not through music, but by being taught to dance. “I could see immediately that she’d really benefitted from somebody dancing with her; she was performing to the people in the room. I’d never seen her have the confidence to sing like that before. So we found that dance itself was a language.”

Funded by the Life Changes Trust, Arora has spent three years combining art, film, music, storytelling, intelligent textiles, soundscape technology and more to creating a multi-artform – or, to expand on Brown’s analogy, multi-lingual – arts programme accessible to people with dementia. It’s an approach tailored to an island with a rich, and bilingual, traditional culture.

“We are working with anthropologists, a professor in sound technology, PhD students and artists to resolve the issues raised in dementia together,” says Brown. “We are finding that artists seek residencies with us and that academics seek research placements because we live in this culturally, linguistically, creatively and geographically rich and unique environment here in the Western Isles.”

The activity, Brown emphasises, is very much shaped by people with dementia, and the interests and concerns they express. “It is their community and they lead it.” Examples include a vinyl print of Stonehaven harbour made by a designer and photographer in collaboration with Norman Macleod, a resident at Blar Buidhe Care Centre, in which parts of the image (a lifeboat, ropes, crates) were coloured to reflect their importance in his memories. On Arora’s blog, the project’s Gaelic co-ordinator Maggie Smith describes how playing the melodeon to a 90-year-old care centre resident helped prompt the woman to recall and recite Gaelic poetry she had written, after staying silent for weeks.

“Originally we were tasked with looking at bilingualism and how it supports the brain,” explains Brown, “but we found we’d uncovered a human rights issue. Some people in care homes could only speak Gaelic, because they were reverting to their first language through the natural process of dementia, but there was nobody to speak Gaelic with them. So we started addressing that with podcasts to help carers to learn Gaelic.”

In many ways, Arora – and other projects like it – is about addressing the cultural rights of older people. Arora’s intention is to create “a dementia-friendly community that reflects the place and its people”, and Brown says it has impacted on An Lanntair’s wider work.

“The programmers are always thinking, ‘how do we do this work for people with dementia?’”

In the central belt, meanwhile, the Festival and King’s Theatres Edinburgh have spent the past two years working to instigate similar cultural change with **Forget Me Not** – also funded by the Life Changes Trust – a project launched in 2015 and designed “to create dementia-friendly communities at the heart of our cultural venues”. Like Arora, it has employed a multi-strand approach, involving people with dementia in creating a new dance commission, hosting a theatre club for carers, monthly tea dances, and storytelling sessions, and staging dementia-friendly performances (including *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* in October 2016 – the first time this had been done in Scotland for a major touring musical).

“It’s kind of embedded in everything we do now,” says Forget Me Not co-ordinator Paul Hudson. Signage has been improved, automatic doors added, new nosings put on the stairs (a development that had over 7200 views on Edinburgh Alzheimer Scotland’s Facebook page), and bigger numbers added to auditorium seats. “Something as simple as making language a bit clearer can have a massive influence on people’s confidence,” says Hudson, “to find their own way to the toilets and back and not get stressed.”

The result, he says, has been increased attendance among older people not just at Forget Me Not events but across the venues’ wider programme. “People are much more confident coming in, knowing it’s a supportive environment, to enjoy a show and socialise.”

The funding for Hudson’s fixed term post ends early in 2018, but, he says, the venues are already committed to employing a full-time, permanent creative ageing co-ordinator, “which will open it up a bit more so we’re looking at the 50-plus age bracket. We’re thinking more strategically.”



Arora © An Lanntair



Arora © An Lanntair

Forget Me Not's work has generated a lot of interest; the Byre, the Tron and Eden Court are among numerous venues asking Hudson for advice about dementia-friendly programming. "One of the biggest things people have found useful is that we've not done everything at once – they've been really interested in the practical, operational approach."

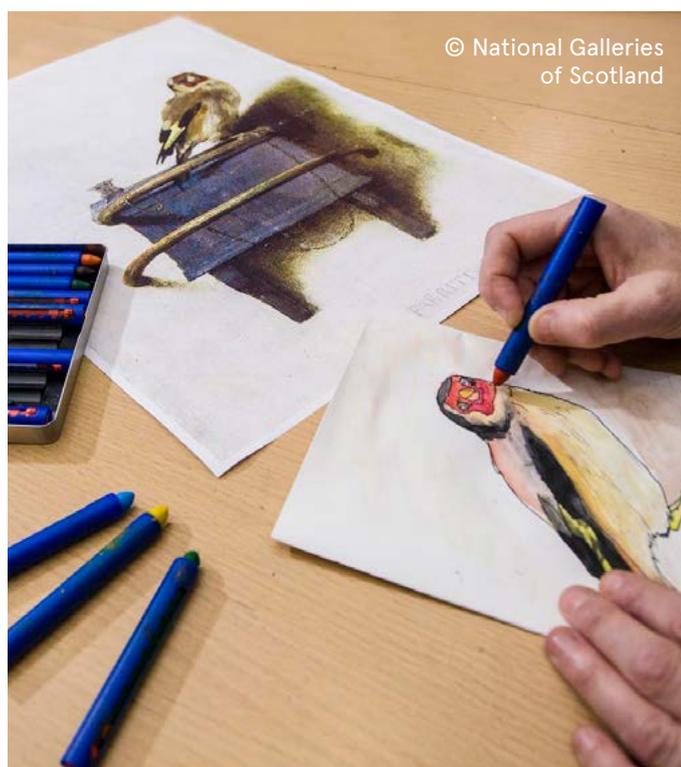
Something similar is happening at the National Galleries of Scotland, which runs dementia-friendly tours, creative workshops and themed reminiscence sessions (inspired by the galleries' collections), and social events including tea dances and concerts. In addition to this, all security and visitor services staff are being trained this year to become Dementia Friends (as part of an Alzheimer Scotland initiative).

A quote from a participant in this year's **Reel Folk Project** – a collaboration between the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Festival Theatre Edinburgh and Live Music Now Scotland – is a good summary of the value of this activity (as well as neatly bringing us back to where we started, with the impact of singing on dementia). "It was nice for my husband to come somewhere where he didn't have to worry about not fitting in. It gave him the confidence to find that he remembered the words to some songs."

i Arora:
www.wearearora.org

i Forget Me Not:
www.edtheatres.com

i National Galleries of Scotland:
www.nationalgalleries.org



A person is seen from behind, wearing a black beanie decorated with colorful heart patterns and a diamond necklace. They are dancing at a club, with their arms raised. The background is filled with vibrant, colorful laser lights in shades of red, green, yellow, and blue, creating a dynamic and energetic atmosphere. The person is wearing a light-colored top and a watch on their left wrist.

“ One of the keys to Luminate’s success is the way it has frequently challenged stereotypes about what sort of art older people might be interested in ”

Luminate, Scotland's creative ageing organisation

Launched in 2012, Luminate is now an established part of Scotland's cultural calendar. The festival's annual, nationwide programme of arts events created by and for older people combines specially curated work (including international collaborations) with projects put forward by individual artists and organisations from across Scotland. The 2016 festival had 322 individual events, including 23 curated or commissioned projects.

"There are still parts of the country I don't think we've made in-roads into as much as we could, but people really value it now," says Luminate director Anne Gallacher. "I've been at events in Shetland and seen people excited that they're in a festival that's also reaching people in Dumfries. There's something about being part of a national programme."

Beyond the festival itself, Luminate is increasingly working to support work happening throughout the year. "Our intention is to become much more of a developmental organisation in the future," says Gallacher. "I get a lot of requests for advice, year round, because there's no one else obvious to ask."

Luminate has had a noticeable impact on Scotland's cultural landscape. The festival was founded – with support from Creative Scotland and the Baring Foundation – in the wake of Scottish Arts Council research showing that older people were engaging in

the arts less than other age groups. Between 2012 and 2015, though, the Scottish Household Survey showed that attendance and participation rates among people aged 75 and over increased by 9 per cent; there were also increased figures across all age groups over 45. "More arts organisations are involved in this kind of work now," says Gallacher, "and we're much more aware of our ageing population – there's more media coverage than five years ago."

One of the keys to Luminate's success is the way it has frequently challenged stereotypes about what sort of art older people might be interested in. The 2015 festival included a documentary called **Hip Hop-eration**, about a group of older New Zealanders preparing for the World Hip Hop Dance Championships in Las Vegas. The first festival programme in 2012 included an older women's rock band from Helsinki. "It was an important statement," recalls Gallacher, "that we were showcasing work that would make you question your assumptions."

Another good example of this is **Up Up and Away**, a 2015 project with the aerial dance company All or Nothing, in which older dancers from Inverclyde performed a piece of aerial dance at Beacon Arts Centre in Greenock. "I will always remember a woman who said she'd been told the previous year she couldn't do an aerial project for health and safety reasons," recalls Gallacher. "She was over the moon to

be able to take part.” All or Nothing, Gallacher notes, has gone on to run classes for older people, “and they hadn’t done it before Luminate. That’s another aspect of what we do – we allow artists to take a risk.”

Choreographer and performer Chrissie Ardrill, who worked on Up, Up and Away, says: “Seeing the responses of the participants to trying something as new and different as aerial was fantastic. They really committed to exploring and experimenting creatively with their new skills.” All or Nothing director Jennifer Paterson describes the project as “a different way of working but very rewarding”.

Gallacher also singles out **Directed by North Merchiston**, a project commissioned with Scottish Care for Luminate 2016, in which filmmaker Duncan Cowles collaborated with care home residents in Edinburgh – encouraging each one to take control of the filmmaking process themselves.

“Duncan is passionate about the impact it’s had on him” says Gallacher. “He still visits the care home and has a relationship with residents and staff there that is lasting.”



“I think as an artist it really instilled the power of filmmaking and documentary, being able to bring real joy to people in its immediacy,” says Cowles, “The process rather than the end outcome can be the most valuable thing for those involved. And I was so touched by the screening of the films to friends and family and seeing the joy it brought to them and the residents.”

“A valuable thing about Luminate is the platform we provide,” adds Gallacher. “A member of PRIME spoke at one of our receptions a couple of years ago. She said that being part of Luminate made her feel that being older dancers has a genuine artistic value. And that’s one of the things that really excites me about Duncan’s project – it’s high quality work created with people in care homes, and why shouldn’t it be?”

 www.luminatescotland.org





“ Seeing the responses of the participants to trying something as new and different as aerial was fantastic ”



“ Older dancers have a completely different kind of presence ... They can simply stand still and frighten the hell out of you with their knowing gaze! ”

There are two distinct creative strands to Dance Base's activities for older people – one focused purely on health and wellbeing, and one which, as artistic director Morag Deyes puts it, "celebrates the fact that we're still standing as older people and what kind of creativity can come out of such life experience and wealth of knowledge. The more visionary aspect is the one I like to go back to as often as possible."

Scotland's national centre for dance combines a cutting edge artistic programme at the Edinburgh Fringe with a year-round programme of classes and community activity, and this balance is reflected in its work with older people. Projects focused on health and wellbeing include **Seated Swing**, a programme of one-hour seated dance classes, delivered across four day centres in Edinburgh, to 15-20 people at a time who have difficulty standing or walking. Seated Swing is funded by Awards for All, Christina Mary Hendrie and the Nancie Massey Charitable Trust, and evaluated by Edinburgh University's Graduate School of Education and Sport.

It is, as Deyes says, "about getting the circulation going, literally", with movements that target motor pathways as well as sequencing pathways in the brain, to stimulate coordination and muscle memory. But the social aspect is equally important. "Isolation can happen even in a room full of people," says Deyes. "The most important thing is that the person who delivers the class can create

a relaxed community atmosphere where everyone feels they can join in."

Dance Base has also been working with Scottish Ballet to create free weekly movement classes, with live music, for people living with Parkinson's – plus care-givers, family members and friends – using techniques developed at Mark Morris Dance Group Centre in New York. Morris (Dance Base artistic patron) had observed how certain repetitive dance movements relieved the symptoms of Parkinson's. Dance Base and Scottish Ballet have also been working with neuroscientist Dr Donald Grosset from Queen Elizabeth University Hospital in Glasgow to research the impact of dance and movement on people with Parkinson's, in partnership with the University of Glasgow, NHS Glasgow and NHS Edinburgh. When I meet Deyes, Dance Base is also planning a project on dance and dementia, exploring the way that our bodies can hold on to memories as well as our minds.

Meanwhile, what Deyes describes as the "more visionary aspect" of Dance Base's work with older people – artistically speaking, that is – is best summed up by **PRIME**, a semi-professional dance company for over 60s which she founded in February 2015. While membership is theoretically open to people with any level of ability and experience, PRIME, Deyes points out, "is a dance company, not a community company" and the line-up changes from creation to creation depending on

who makes it through the audition process. "We can't get too sentimental about it unfortunately," says Deyes. "It's not about who I like or who the choreographer likes, it's about what they are bringing to the room and the kind of commitment to training they are prepared to make."

The results – while tough for PRIME regulars who did not get through the latest audition – have been spectacular. "They're knocking the socks off other elder dance companies around the UK," Deyes says. "They're fitter and more confident on stage, and it's approached as a professional production so we have a professional lighting designer, professional costume design, professional choreographer and we encourage and receive a professional attitude from the company."

Older dancers, she says, have a completely different kind of presence on stage to younger ones. "They can simply stand still and frighten the hell out of you with their knowing gaze!" she laughs. "Younger dancers can't wait to fill every moment with their fizzing energy and vitality. It's a bit like the thought process in a way, needing to fill every moment with ideas and words, but as you age you can sort of sit back down and observe what is happening in a more measured way. Older dancers can hold a moment in a way that younger dancers find almost impossible. And they can be sensual without trying to be sexy. It's beautiful."

The choreographers PRIME has worked with – Angus Balbernie, Steinvor Palsson, Morag Deyes and Ashley Jack – support this view. "One said it was the best experience she'd ever had and she's been choreographing for 30 years," says Deyes. "What they discover is the mindfulness and enthusiasm these unique dancers can bring to the studio."

PRIME has already toured Scotland as part of Luminare, performed at the Edinburgh Fringe and Edinburgh's Hogmanay, and represented Scotland at Joie de Vivre, a festival in Bournemouth celebrating older people and dance. Deyes would like the project to "go global. It's not as bonkers as it sounds. Older people have a lot more time on their hands, so taking a couple of weeks to go to Tasmania – where we were actually invited to go – isn't so unlikely if you don't have to worry about childcare, or a full time job."

Another factor that could help PRIME go global is that countries across the world are thinking about the arts as part of their approach to ageing, and some have festivals and events to celebrate age, like Luminare. "I know there are choreographers around the world – big names in fact – who would love the idea of that challenge," says Deyes, "and who could then of course take our idea of a semi professional company back to their country and say 'why don't we do that here?'"

 www.dancebase.co.uk



“ One choreographer said it was the best experience she’d ever had and she’s been choreographing for 30 years ”



“ The environment expands the group’s experience of the world ”

Barrowland Ballet

Launched in 2016, Barrowland Ballet's intergenerational Company, **Wolf Pack**, has 30 participants, ranging in age from seven to mid-70s, who meet for rehearsals every week at the Citizens' Theatre in Glasgow, creating choreography via improvisation and games. The first time company director Natasha Gilmore worked with an intergenerational cast was her early show *A Conversation with Carmel*, which was set at an 80th birthday party and worked with local participants at each venue to make up the three generations of the story's family.

"Coming from a big family it always just felt like a natural way to work," says Gilmore, "within this family type atmosphere where the differences in age create a harmonious balance. As a choreographer I feel that placing older dancers with these different age groups is a sure way not to make assumptions about their creativity and physical range. The younger participants are constantly surprised

by the vigour and dynamism of the older dancers and this inspires them."

Wolf Pack's current plans include a short dance film, a new performance piece in 2018, and a new touring version of its first show *Wolves*, which featured 75 performers and included a trio representing three generations of women.

"I think the environment expands the group's experience of the world," says Gilmore. "In other areas of their lives they are often positioned alongside their own age group and our intergenerational group turns that on its head and enables you to challenge assumptions about the different age groups. I think it develops their respect and understanding of each other. There is always a lot of laughter in the group. I feel certain that this relaxed, open minded atmosphere would not happen if the age groups were isolated from each other."

 barrowlandballet.co.uk

Barrowland Ballet © Brian Hartley





“There is a huge, and growing, demand for creative activities for those living with dementia,” says Donna Macpherson, education manager for Scottish Opera, which has run a dementia arts project, **Memory Spinners**, for seven years now. Taking place in Scottish Opera Production Studios in Glasgow – and more recently in Edinburgh too – its weekly workshops use music, storytelling, movement and visual arts to help people with dementia and their carers “relax and get creative”. After eight weeks, the group stages a short performance for friends and family. Feedback from participants is that they feel more relaxed (100%), healthier (88%), that they sing more at home (82%) and feel less isolated (50%).

Scottish Opera recently added a pilot project, **Spinning Songs**, in which nursery groups, primary school children, and around 50 people in care homes across three different local authorities all sang together. It is, notably, also the only opera company in the UK to stage dementia-friendly performances – three in the past year, to 170 people per show – in which sound/lighting levels are adjusted, the cast is joined on stage by a narrator, and audiences can come and go from the auditorium. “By creating this unique environment, we hope to help those living with dementia stay active, have the confidence to continue enjoying music, and reap the benefits that engagement with live performance can bring,” says Macpherson.

“Funding is always a problem,” she warns. “At present, about 13% of our overall project budget is spent on our work with people living with dementia. Working out the best way to ‘roll out’ the projects into other parts of the country is tricky: we will run out of human and financial resources long before we’ve made a significant impact on the way local authorities cope with the issue.” The impact so far, though, is significant. “We anticipated a positive impact for the person with dementia and their carer,” says Macpherson, “but we have also come to understand the significant ‘ripple effect’ **Memory Spinners** creates, and the benefits for the wider support network of each participant.”

 www.scottishopera.org.uk



Spinning Songs
© Iain Percy



“ This group is often more risk taking and open than those younger than them ”

Dundee Contemporary Arts

In March this year, Dundee Contemporary Arts' **Senior Citizen Kane Club** sold 138 tickets for *Moonlight*, a coming-of-age film about a young gay black man in Miami. This was, admittedly, the week after it won three Oscars, but it suggests you'd be unwise to make assumptions about the film tastes of older people in Dundee. "This group is often more risk taking and open than those younger than them," says Alice Black, DCA's head of cinema, adding that the club "has challenged our assumptions of how far we can push the boundaries."

Senior Citizen Kane Club began in 2009 as a fortnightly, sociable Thursday morning event, with free refreshments, to encourage older audiences to experience the full range of DCA's film programme. Such clubs, Black acknowledges, are common, but this one was all new releases, some mainstream, some less so, each introduced by one of the cinema team. Audiences gradually grew bigger - and, as trust developed, more willing to embrace the unfamiliar - and the club has run weekly since 2012.

It is now so consistently popular, with over 3000 annual admissions, that DCA is guaranteed an audience for even the most challenging films. "It has become an important part of our box office income generation," says Black; film distributors often specifically request this slot. Screenings in 2016 ranged from *The BFG* to *Son of Saul* (and the

harrowing *Holocaust* film only sold 16 fewer tickets than Spielberg's crowd-pleaser).

"We believe that in older age, maintaining new interests and social contacts is vital," says Black. "To see this being achieved every single week is one of the most satisfying elements of our cinema programme. There is often an assumption that engaging with the arts has to involve making; critical viewing is often overlooked. We've seen first-hand the benefits which can occur when a film sparks a reaction - be it a memory, a conversation, or simply an emotion."

 www.dca.org.uk





“ One of the things I noticed was how important cloth was in the daily lives of residents ”

In 2012, Glasgow-based artist Deirdre Nelson spent a week working at Saffron House, a care home in Bristol. "One of the things I noticed," she wrote later in a [blog](#)⁷ about the experience, "was how important cloth was in the daily lives of residents, in terms both of clothing and their environment (napkins, table cloths etc)." Nelson says she was particularly inspired by an article by Professor Julia Twigg called [Clothing and Dementia](#)⁸ based on Twigg's research into how cloth and clothing can be a positive stimulus.

Three years later, in 2015, Nelson's experiences informed [Footerin' and Fiddlin'](#), a project at the Orchard View continuing care bed facility at Inverclyde Royal Hospital. Commissioned by Wide Open Net and funded by Creative Scotland, the project saw Nelson creating tactile dogs for patients to interact with, aprons that could be coloured in, and interactive fabric books.

"The project ideas came about through interaction with patients with dementia and observations on how patients interacted with cloth," Nelson explains. "This work is important to the participants as it provides a tactile homely addition to an alien environment. One of my highlights has been showing patients an image of the Waverley (paddle steamer) and listening to them engage and speak in a way I hadn't previously experienced with them. The image sparked memories of holidays, and is an iconic image for Glasgow and Inverclyde area."

www.deirdre-nelson.co.uk



© Eoin Carey

7 <https://thenapkinprojectblog.wordpress.com/deirdres-project/>

8 [Clothing and Dementia: www.clothingandage.org/papers/download/Clothing and dementia.pdf](http://www.clothingandage.org/papers/download/Clothing%20and%20dementia.pdf)



“Craft Café is incredibly simple – you are asked what you want to do and we make that happen,” says Natalie McFadyen White, senior programme manager for Impact Arts, of the charity’s flagship project for older people. “Through that simple question and having access to professional tuition and materials, members feel valued, listened to, and have new social connections.”

Craft Café began in Castlemilk, Glasgow, in 2008, with the aim of developing a creative approach to engaging older people, long term, in the local community, and reducing social isolation. It quickly became a member-led, professional artist studio space, open at least three days a week, 10am to 4pm, with a permanent artist in residence. Its programme has since expanded to Edinburgh, Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire and North Ayrshire, involving over 1000 older people to date. Member surveys report that 96% have felt more socially connected and physically/mentally healthier after taking part. “I’ve had two strokes and Craft Café has given me my life back,” one responded.

Craft Café projects in 2016 and 2017 have included two large exhibitions – one of members’ work at Glasgow’s Tall Ship, attended by 18,000 people, and Govan in Pictures, a show of photography created, curated and installed by members, with over 90 local people attending the opening event. There were also craft sales of members’ work and an intergenerational project with 32 primary seven pupils, in which Craft Café members passed on skills they had learned, such as mosaic, grouting and book-binding.

“I want Craft Café to sustain and grow,” says McFadyen White. “The main obstacle is funding. Craft Café works because it is adaptable and responsive to members’ needs, but this can only happen when a well-trained, talented creative team are in place to deliver quality activities.”

 www.impactarts.co.uk





“ It is about celebrating long lives well lived. It is also about connecting people and reducing isolation ”

Tricky Hat Productions

“The **Flaming Elders** project gives older people a voice and a chance to discover something new about themselves,” says Emma Campbell of Tricky Hat, a theatre company that makes work with, and about, people on the margins of society. “It is about celebrating long lives well lived. It is also about connecting people and reducing isolation.”

Since 2015, Flaming Elders has been working with community-based organisations in Dumfries and Galloway, north west Glasgow and Inverclyde, to create theatre using digital art and music with older people who, as Campbell puts it, “had never had the opportunity to work with professional artists in this way. Put a different way, this project is for people who don’t know they want to do it yet.”

In 2016, as part of Luminare, Tricky Hat launched **The Flames**, a new multi-media theatre group in Glasgow for performers aged 50 and over. In total, Campbell says, the project has involved 150 participants; following its completion in October 2017, she is keen “to generate new collaborations and partnerships in other areas of Scotland”.

“Tricky Hat would like there to be a recognised theatre form for older people, this is what we work towards. As we age our expectations for the future are greater – what are we going to do with our time when we are older and not working, what creative opportunities will be there for us? Will these opportunities be of quality? It is difficult becoming older. We need to look at different and better ways for the future and art and culture can play an important part in that.”

 trickyhat.com



“

**Creative ageing represents
an extension of a healthy and
fulfilled life – in other words,
a human right**”



Conclusions

In each interview I carried out for this publication I asked the question “what does creative ageing mean to you?”. The answers were very varied, from “activity, inclusion and participation for all as we age” and “the potential to explore new creative avenues as you grow older” to “joy”. The response that has stayed with me longest was from Jane Davidson, Director of Outreach and Education at Scottish Opera, which I quote in full below.

“Creative ageing represents an extension of a healthy and fulfilled life: in other words, creativity is healthy. i.e. if people have access to creative opportunities of any kind; there is significant evidence based research to tell us (not to mention the people themselves!) that those people are far more likely to enjoy better mental and physical health; they are more socially adept and engaged; their opinions and value systems are more balanced, tolerant and compassionate because of the range and breadth of those creative expressions.

“Older artists, too, have an increasingly vital role to play in supporting the community as a whole to maintain /prolong their physical and mental well-being. Decades of experience in one or other of the arts forms is fantastic in itself (in terms of ‘technical’ expertise and quality) but it’s also hugely important that the creative approach towards engaging with others/ sharing this expertise that older artists can bring to bear is recognised.

“This is especially crucial in terms of CPD (continuing professional development) – building capacity within community services such as Healthcare, Older People’s services & Further Education- training practitioners and staff to recognise and value creativity in themselves and in others.”

What Davidson’s thoughtful, expansive definition illustrates is that ‘creative ageing’ is a potentially transformative idea, but only if that idea is embedded across various contexts – the arts sector, the care sector, education, policy etc. Several people I interviewed for this publication spoke of the need for a “cultural shift” in attitudes towards arts projects created for/by older people, and a wider, deeper understanding of their benefits. Edith Macintosh, head of improvement support for the Care Inspectorate, suggested society is guilty of “not seeing the (artistic) potential in older people”, adding that it’s important to “use powerful stories to show it’s possible”.

I would suggest several things have to happen for such a cultural shift to take place.

Profile-raising

The kinds of 'powerful stories' Macintosh refers to have been widely shared in recent years by Luminate, not only through the festival events themselves but also the media coverage and public discussions those events have generated. "Luminate has done a massive amount to validate and give voice and credibility to older people's creative work," says Emma Campbell of Tricky Hat (whose own slogan is 'Theatre making the invisible, visible'). "They have shone a light on all of the work that is out there." However Campbell notes that some of the participants in her own projects "can be barriers to their own involvement. Sometimes they don't see themselves as creative or as artists and don't think the project is something they can do. The people around them - and society as a whole - often buy into this view." In other words, a cultural shift is also needed among older people themselves. Luminate is likely to continue to play an important role in this. "There's an advocacy role for Luminate moving forwards," says director Anne Gallacher, "supporting organisations, testing new ways of working, training artists..."

Long term strategic thinking and investment

"Three-year funding cycles are not right for these types of project," Natalie McFadyen White, senior programme manager for Impact Arts, told me. "The progression outcome is around members still being active and engaging, not moving on." She was referring in particular to Impact Arts' Craft Café programme (see p41 for more detail). "The need for Craft Café does not decrease the more people who access it, it increases and current funding options do not cater to this." Emma Campbell of Tricky Hat echoed this when voicing her frustration at having "to constantly prove (our work) is worth doing."

A lot, certainly, can be achieved in three years, as demonstrated in Edinburgh by Forget Me Not, the Festival and King's Theatres' multi-faceted programme "to create dementia-friendly communities at the heart of our cultural venues". Forget Me Not's biggest achievement may be that its thinking is now, as co-ordinator Paul Hudson puts it, "embedded into the structure of the organisation and any future alterations to the building". An example is that all the seats in the Festival Theatre are being replaced and renumbered so that the auditorium is much easier to navigate for people with visual impairment. Another is the impact it has had on the venue's 200 staff. "Quite a lot of our staff have got direct experience of people living with dementia so it's helped them with



their own experiences,” Hudson says. “It’s given them that extra awareness of what is quite often a hidden disability.”

In other words, a project focusing on dementia has, over time, evolved into a wider programme to make theatre venues more accessible to older people in general. A crucial point about Forget Me Not, though – and one that anyone responsible for funding decisions should take note of – is that the venues are now committed to continuing the project’s work beyond its initial three-year lifespan by employing a full-time, permanent creative ageing co-ordinator.

Stronger partnerships between the arts and healthcare sectors

The Care Inspectorate’s Arts in Care resource pack (see p19) is helping to build and strengthen relationships between professional artists and care workers. However Edith Macintosh identifies numerous obstacles still to be overcome – including a lack of confidence, awareness, staff time and resources. What is needed, she suggested in our interview, is “a mandate that gives permission to care professionals to make (the arts) a priority along with other types of activities to maintain health and wellbeing, such as moving more each day.”

Lilias Fraser of Scottish Poetry Library described a “slight sense of two worlds colliding” when seeking continued support for Living Voices, a proven success with care

home residents, their families, and staff. “The NHS has to justify costs and an arts project is very well equipped to talk about the benefits but less comfortably equipped to turn it into a statistical value or saving,” she says. Why, a health provider might ask, pay for storytelling, song and poetry sessions for a dozen care home residents when they could just hire one entertainer for everybody?

“It’s not a problem unique to our project,” Fraser says. “There’s a big question about how you prove value to health and social care commissioning partnerships. For example someone was talking to us about doing a small-scale study to see if we could reduce the number of falls. You can do those kinds of studies and they can be very useful and valuable to show people there’s an evidence base for what you’re arguing, especially when you’re working intensively with smaller groups. It can be done but there’s a question mark over that not telling the whole story. Various projects will be familiar with that particular quandary.”

There is no obvious solution to this other than, perhaps, a focus on strengthening relationships and trust between the two sectors. “I have learned that it is important to appreciate the opportunities and the challenges for care professionals in their everyday life,” says Edith Macintosh. “Both care professionals and professional artists have to appreciate one another’s roles and perspectives in order to see success.” Macintosh also suggests training for artists

would be beneficial, for example, “in working with frailer older people in relation to communication, adapting approaches etc”. She has previously observed how some creative arts sessions for older people “took place with the best intentions but they were not always person led or truly participative – sometimes this is because of risk averseness or it may be that the person leading the session does not appreciate the difference.”

More support for older emerging professional artists

“If you take up an art form when you’re older and find you have a talent, who do you go to for help?” asks Anne Gallacher of Luminare. It’s a good question; one answer recently proposed by Luminare was this year’s week-long Older Artists’ Lab at Cove Park on the Rosneath peninsula. The idea was inspired by the experiences of Sylvia Dow, who had her first play professionally produced at the age of 70. A former drama teacher, arts education officer and arts consultant, Dow had completed a creative writing degree after she retired. She has gone on to write for Stellar Quines, the Traverse, and Dundee Rep, but wondered aloud whether she would have achieved this without the knowledge and networks she’d already built up through a career in the arts.

The application process for the lab was open to everyone over 50. Luminare had considered only making it open to people

over 60, Gallacher says, but it seemed like a good retort to the Turner Prize’s (often criticised and subsequently abolished) rule that only artists under 50 are eligible. The lab was by all accounts a great success, but its popularity (130 people applied for just six places) suggests a pressing need for more initiatives in a similar vein. As Francois Matarosso observes in *Late Calls: A Report on a Pilot Lab for Early Career Older Artists*, there are numerous obstacles to people beginning an artistic career late in life, from responsibilities, dependants and ties to the financial sacrifice involved (a considerably larger gamble than for a young person who can pay off debts over decades) and society’s prejudices, particularly “the deadly, unspoken question: if you are really an artist, what took you so long?” As Matarosso notes, “we are not yet past the idea that the only way to be a serious artist is to have started young.”

And finally... a focus on human rights

“If you look at what’s happening in the care sector we’ve got new standards being consulted on and culture is in there as part of the discussion,” observes Anne Gallacher of Luminare. This brings us back to Jane Davidson’s point that “creative ageing represents an extension of a healthy and fulfilled life” – in other words, a human right. The case studies in this publication demonstrate that cultural rights and the right to health are intricately connected.

“ Older Artists’ Lab was inspired by the experiences of Sylvia Dow, who had her first play professionally produced at the age of 70 ”



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