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Press release — **EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 WEDNESDAY 16 NOVEMBER**

## **MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES MY FESTIVAL, A MAJOR INITIATIVE FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

Manchester International Festival announces a major new programme of work with local people, **My Festival: MIF's Creative Community**.

**My Festival** will see a huge variety of activity taking place around the city over the next five years, from large scale public commissions during the Festival to intimate micro Festivals curated by local people, and year-round talent development opportunities for local creatives.

The scope of My Festival will grow and change in response to participants' input and needs. Current plans include:

### - **Participatory commissions**

Since 2009, several MIF shows have featured local people in starring roles, including *FlexN*, *Procession* and *That Day We Sang*. Building on this work, My Festival participants will be invited to take part in MIF17 commissions beginning with *What is the City but the People?*, the opening event of the Festival.

### - **Talent and skills development**

My Festival will support learning opportunities for local artists and creatives, starting with the Jerwood Creative Fellows scheme for six creative practitioners to make deeper connections with MIF, widening their experience of cross-disciplinary arts commissions. My Festival will also run digital skills development programmes funded by a recent Arts Council Ambition for Excellence award

### - **Festival in My House**

A series of micro international festivals curated by local people and hosted in their own houses for neighbours, friends and MIF audiences. Two pilot projects in November and December 2016 are:

- **M8 Festival** – curated by Yatie Aziz from Cheetham Hill, featuring cross cultural music, food and dance.
- **Mehndi Festival** – curated by Nija Dalal-Smith from Levenshulme, inviting Manchester-based visual artists from across different disciplines to interpret this traditional art form and create their own contemporary mehndi hand decoration.

Manchester households are now invited to submit ideas for new micro-festivals over the next 6 months.

My Festival has been developed by MIF's new Artistic Director John McGrath and the Festival's Creative Learning department, led by Dr Jennifer Cleary, in response to ideas and feedback from a wide range of Manchester artists and community members.

John said: *'My Festival will combine the most invigorating artists and ideas with a real commitment to community leadership, skills-development and creativity. We are making a year-round invitation to Manchester residents to engage with and learn about*

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*everything that makes the festival special. Equally, the Festival will grow and discover new possibilities from the connections and creativity that local people bring.'*

My Festival is generously supported by four Trusts and Foundations, which together have contributed over £500,000:

- the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, which is supporting two new staff posts at MIF with a grant of £255,680 over three years
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation, which is supporting year-round activity and participatory commissions with a grant of £200,000 over two years
- the Baring Foundation, which is supporting engagement with a specific emphasis on older people with a grant of £40,000
- the Jerwood Charitable Foundation, which has given a grant of £30,250 to support Jerwood Creative Fellows, six local creative practitioners making deeper connections with MIF to widen their experience of cross-disciplinary arts commissions

More information and sign up details can be found at [mif.co.uk/my-festival](http://mif.co.uk/my-festival)

The first four Festival commissions for MIF17 are announced today and run from the global – Yael Bartana's upending of Dr Strangelove's phallogocentric worldview with *What if Women Ruled the World?* – to the local, with a big public opening event in Piccadilly Gardens, *What Is the City but the People?* The Festival reaffirms its European connections with new work by choreographer Boris Charmatz, and looks deep in to the heart of the men of England with bold new theatre show *Fatherland*. See [mif.co.uk](http://mif.co.uk) for more details and ticket booking info.

Notes to Editors

**Manchester International Festival (MIF)** is the world's first festival of original, new work and special events. The Festival is staged every two years in Manchester, UK – the next edition will take place from 29 June to 16 July 2017 at venues all over the city.

MIF launched in 2007 as an artist-led festival presenting new works from across the spectrum of performing arts, visual arts and popular culture. We've commissioned, produced and presented world premieres by artists as diverse as Björk, Steve McQueen, Maxine Peake, Robert Wilson, Elbow, Wayne McGregor, The xx, Zaha Hadid Architects, Damon Albarn, Punchdrunk and Marina Abramović, among many others.

We bring together artists from different art forms and backgrounds to create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work, which we stage in a rich tapestry of venues across Greater Manchester –from theatres, galleries and concert halls to railway depots, churches and car parks. We work closely with venues, festivals and other cultural organisations around the world, whose financial and creative input helps to make many of our projects possible and guarantees that they have a life after each Festival has ended.

We also work widely within communities around Manchester, originally with MIF Creative and now with a new initiative called My Festival. Launched in November 2016, My Festival is a diverse network of creative people who are forging closer connections with MIF – taking part in public projects, connecting MIF to their communities, and joining our new programme of training activities, workshops and other special events.

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MIF is a registered charity. Alongside the income we receive from Manchester City Council and Arts Council England, our principal funders, we also receive income from ticket sales and co-commissioning partners; from other public bodies, such as the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA); from private sponsorship; from charitable trusts and foundations; and from individual donations.

### **The Baring Foundation**

The Baring Foundation is an independent foundation working to improve the quality of life of people experiencing disadvantage and discrimination. We aim to achieve this through making grants to voluntary and other civil society organisations and by adding value including through promoting knowledge and influencing others. Since 1995 the Foundation has focused its main attention on three grants programmes: Arts (specifically engaging the talent, experience and enthusiasm of older people in the creative arts); International Development; and Strengthening the Voluntary Sector. [www.baringfoundation.org.uk](http://www.baringfoundation.org.uk)

### **Esmée Fairbairn Foundation**

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation aims to improve the quality of life for people and communities throughout the UK both now and in the future. We do this by funding the charitable work of organisations with the ideas and ability to achieve positive change. The Foundation is one of the largest independent grant-makers in the UK. We make grants of £30 - £35 million annually towards a wide range of work within the arts, children and young people, the environment, social change and food. We also commit up to £35 million in social investments in organisations that aim to deliver both a financial return and a social benefit. [www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk](http://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk)

### **Jerwood Charitable Foundation**

Jerwood Charitable Foundation is dedicated to imaginative and responsible revenue funding of the arts, supporting artists to develop and grow at important stages in their careers. The aim of its funding is to allow artists and arts organisations to thrive; to continue to develop their skills, imagination and creativity with integrity. It works with artists across art forms, from dance and theatre to literature, music and the visual arts. [www.jerwoodcharitablefoundation.org](http://www.jerwoodcharitablefoundation.org)

### **Paul Hamlyn Foundation**

Paul Hamlyn Foundation was established by Paul Hamlyn in 1987. Upon his death in 2001, he left most of his estate to the Foundation, creating one of the largest independent grant-making foundations in the UK. Our mission is to help people overcome disadvantage and lack of opportunity, so that they can realise their potential and enjoy fulfilling and creative lives. We have a particular interest in supporting young people and a strong belief in the importance of the arts. [www.phf.org.uk](http://www.phf.org.uk)