



The Paper Birds Theatre Company presents

The School of Hope

Where Art Meets Change

A global study of empathy and a platform to address the isolation young people all over the world have been experiencing over the past 14 months.

- The School of Hope (TSoH) is a socially-engaged, multi-artform digital arts project created with and for young people (13-25 years old) along the theme of empathy.
- The Paper Birds has commissioned 4 exceptional British artists - Akeim Toussaint Buck, Arwa Aburawa, Sonny Green and Jade Anouka - to, alongside The Paper Birds, each create a filmic brief to shape and inspire the young creatives participating in the project who will then offer their own artistic response to it.
- A short film commissioned as a response to the young participants' artwork and Manifestos of Hope and a documentary film charting the progress of The School of Hope around the world will form the legacy of the project. Both films will premiere in the autumn at an exclusive event.
- 9 partner organisations and over 200 young people from the UK, Indonesia, Canada, Belgium and USA are engaged in The School of Hope across summer 2021, sharing stories and undertaking tasks before creating their own Manifestos of Hope.
- The Company is also working with academics to measure the impact of the project on participants, with a focus on mental wellbeing.
- The School of Hope is a 7-month long research project for The Paper Birds' next show, *Feel Me*, to be produced in 2022.
- Artworks by the young people will be available to view on www.theschoolofhope.co.uk.



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The Paper Birds is a multi-award winning devising theatre company with a political and social agenda and a vision to provoke change, one encounter at a time. Following the successful tour of [Ask Me Anything](#) in 2020 - cut short by the global pandemic - The Paper Birds continue to engage with young people through **The School of Hope (TSoH), a digital arts and global citizenship project for young creatives, aged 13-25.**

Taking place between June and autumn 2021, **the project is based on the theme of empathy and uses art to address the isolation people under 25 have experienced during the pandemic**, increasing the young creatives' wellbeing, sense of purpose and levels of empathy, as well as encouraging them to be socially and politically engaged. The Paper Birds is connecting young artists from 9 organisations around the world to creatively discover who they are, how they understand themselves in relation to others and how they might use art to provoke change. It is hoped that TSoH will increase participants' empathy levels and general wellbeing.

Through a series of creative tutorials and digital workshops The Paper Birds will use the arts to engage young people, exploring empathy both from emotive and academic perspectives. At the heart of each workshop is a **bespoke commissioned film**, of varying artforms, created by The Paper Birds and 4 exceptional artists from the UK to inspire the young creatives to create their own artworks in response.

The 4 artists commissioned for The School of Hope are: **Akeim Toussaint Buck**, an interdisciplinary performer who creates thought provoking, accessible and free-spirited work, which is embodied in his commissioned piece for TSoH, using his unique combination of poetry, dance and beatboxing.

Arwa Aburawa, a documentary filmmaker and writer with an interest in social and environmental issues, will be inspiring the young creatives around the notion of identity. She has produced documentaries on a range of issues including the water crisis in Iran, the lives of sugarcane workers in El Salvador, and the legacies of colonialism in Guatemala, and is an **IWMF** and One World Media fellow.

Sonny Green is a spoken word artist and will be encouraging the young creatives to 'Widen the Lens'. He was the first ever rap artist to perform at the House of Commons supporting Fatboy Slim and consistently delivers confident and original live performances. Sonny calls it as he sees it, and his angry lyrical tirades are a completely uncompromising, calling out of everyone from politicians to his peers without fear.

Finally, the multi-talented **Jade Anouka**, who recently appeared on our screens as Ruta Skadi in the BBC adaptation of **His Dark Materials**, will be the final artist rallying a call to action from the young creatives to produce their Manifestos of Hope. Jade performs regularly as a poet, including featured spots at The Southbank Centre, The Roundhouse and Sofar Sounds. She also wrote, directed and co-starred in the short film, *Her & Her* for BBC's Culture In Quarantine series.

The project culminates in the creation of a short film by **Naomi Waring** where the participants' voices and Manifestos of Hope for today and tomorrow will be platformed. The film will premiere at an exclusive event this autumn and offer a collective vision of how art can be used to bring about change.

Documentary filmmaker **Kee Lewis** will be charting the progress of The School of Hope around the world and his documentary about the project will also premiere at the same event.

The Paper Birds will use the research and Manifestos of Hope created by the young artists to inform and inspire a highly visual and poetic touring show for young people currently planned for 2022-2023: ***Feel Me***. The time spent on this phase of Research and Development is representative of The Paper Birds' belief that the journey matters just as much as the destination when producing a show and that it is created by and for its audience.

The nine partner organisations delivering The School of Hope to over 200 young creatives from 5 countries are: **Theatre Centre**, London; **The National Theatre's** Young People's Programme; **CAST**, Doncaster; **Sheffield Theatres**; **The Mercury**, Colchester; **Padepokan Seni Bagong Kussudiardja** (PSBK) in Indonesia; **Vancouver International Children's Festival**; **Victoria Deluxe Arts Centre** in Ghent, Belgium, and **Boom Arts** in Portland, Oregon (USA).

The Paper Birds has collaborated with 3 academics specialising in mental health to measure the impact of the project on the young creatives. Please find more Information on them in Notes to Editors.

Jemma McDonnell, Co-Director (Artistic) of The Paper Birds said: "A study published in June 2020 by the University of Bath, suggested that young people who experienced loneliness during lockdown might be as much as three times more likely to develop depression in the future, and the impact of loneliness on young people's mental health could last for at least 9 years. There has never been a better time to put young people at the forefront of our thinking and planning.

"For a long time now, we have felt as company that our process is as important and as impactful as our final product, whatever that may be. Process for us, often means community consolation, workshops and interviews all feeding into what a piece can and should be. The School of Hope is the first phase in a large and ambitious project that puts young people front and centre. In the long term we aim to commission a young creative team to make a part live, part digital theatre show about empathy. But right now, through The School of Hope we are interacting with hundreds of young people, to measure and learn what that show needs to be.

"We truly believe that through an arts project off the back of COVID, we can offer young people the time, space and inspiration to reflect on the last year and look forward to the future and the kind of world they want to live in."

National Theatre said: "We are excited to be a part of The School of Hope and to open up a space for participants across the UK to come together, explore their hopes for the future and find connections in their experiences."

Padepokan Seni Bagong Kussudiardja said: "This project is of particular interest for us as it takes both the Artistic and Creative Learning strands in community engagement and collaboration to the next level - that can amplify impact, enhance skills and understanding, and push creative strategies to new directions. With the support from the British Council's Connections Through Culture Programme, we are

especially pleased that this collaboration enables PSBK to facilitate quality exchange of UK-ID artists to prepare the implementation of The School of Hope lessons with communities; to invite 20-24 young hearing- and hearing-impaired Indonesians from diverse backgrounds to participate in the workshop; and to share The School of Hope digital toolkit with other Indonesian communities.”

/ENDS

Notes To Editors:

To find out more about the project and see artworks as they are uploaded visit www.theschoolofhope.co.uk

The School of Hope is funded by **Arts Council England, Garfield Weston, Rayne Foundation**, and The British Council - Connections Through Culture programme.

Press Pack including images, biographies etc. is available [here](#).

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The Paper Birds theatre company has been making work with and for communities since 2003. They make theatre using themes that feel important in the here and now and believe that process is as significant and empowering as product. They are known for their use of verbatim and bringing multiple, diverse voices to the fore. They believe people have more in common than that which divides them, and they seek to unite and bring about dialogue in society through our work. Each year up to 20,000 young people around the world engage with their work as participants, audiences or co-authors. Their digital impact has doubled during 2020-21, and continues to grow. They strive to encourage change one encounter at a time; they want people’s lives to be improved by the arts and to encourage agency through the workshops, performances and conversations that they lead.

For more information about...

The Artists - click [here](#)

The Filmmakers - click [here](#)

The UK Partners - click [here](#)

The International Partners - click [here](#)

The Academics - click [here](#)

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