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The Met

Annual Report

2020 / 2021



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The Met Annual Report 2020/21

Despite much of this year being affected by the global pandemic of Covid-19, The Met implemented innovative ways to reach audiences, build audiences and serve our community, both in-person and online. Live audience figures and ticketing income were obviously drastically affected. But through creative thinking, generous donations and grants, The Met remained strong, engaged online audiences and re-opened its doors in June 2021.

The Met remained resilient and dynamic throughout and invested in the development of staff. Our Marketing Assistant up skilled to become our Digital Content Officer. This role allowed us to adapt to the changing climate, produce digital content, live streams and reach new audiences. We secured additional funding which purchased necessary equipment and partly funded this new role.

We kept the building busy as much as we could throughout lockdowns and welcomed a local foodbank to use the building to store food. Some of our staff also volunteered to help run the foodbank which supported our staff's mental health and the local community.

Our Vision

We believe that The Met should be a nationally recognized venue of arts and culture, accessible to all, combining international reach with local impact to contribute towards Bury's aspiration to be a cultural leader in the region.

Our Mission

The Met exists to inspire excellence in music and creativity, it is about quality, openness, enthusiasm, and passion.

We enhance the quality of living and working in Bury and Greater Manchester by engaging our communities with brilliant live experiences and creative opportunities. We prioritise enhancing the wellbeing of our diverse communities and strive to strengthen their sense of social cohesion and local pride.

Our Values

Inclusivity

A 'safe space', with shared and consistent values, a culture of transparency and openness to adapt and make space for everyone to support the wellbeing of staff, artists, audiences, participants, and our local communities.

Relevance

Using the 5 Cs of Context, Commitment, Communication, Competence and Culture to inform practice that keeps our communities at the heart of everything that we do.

Ambition & Quality

We aim to inspire people, aiming for excellence in everything we do from presentation to the overall experience and engagement of audiences.

Dynamism

Innovative, collaborative, sustainable, quality approaches in all our work that is responsive to opportunity.

Environmental Responsibility

Conducting our business practices and events in a responsible way that respects the environment, reducing the environmental impact of The Met and associated partners.

Artistic Development & Respect

We want artists to discover and develop their talent, providing new experiences and opportunities to learn, network and perform. We nurture and develop staff, partners, artists, and collaborators.

What we have achieved

We attracted
45 million
online audiences

220
individuals participated in our workshop
programme over the year, spanning over
182 individual workshops

20
volunteers gave 70 hours of volunteer
time to the organisation

We generated
£36,806
of income through ticket sales

Audiences

2020/2021 was a challenging year for audiences with the venue being closed much of the time. However, we proved adaptable with much of our programme moving online. Our partnership with United We Stream also record streaming audiences of around 45 million. So, despite not being able to see in-person audiences that matched previous years, The Met enjoyed exposure to millions of new audiences. The Met is exploring how we can engage those online audiences in the future and what opportunities this might present.

We were delighted to be able to keep engaging audiences through lockdowns and providing artists opportunity to perform. The venue finally reopened permanently in June 2021 amidst a large re-opening campaign.

Case study

During lockdowns we continued our commitment to develop artists. Through our online programme 'artists from anywhere,' we streamed a performance from Joshua Burnside. This exposure and audience development then saw him return for his first live performance at the venue to an audience of 22. A modest audience, but new to the venue.

Programme Highlights

We navigated the lockdowns with a focus on supporting artists, keeping our audiences engaged and supporting Greater Manchester Communities with a responsive and partnership-based programme of digital work.

In December we broadcast live from The Met with content gathered in Ramsbottom that week to present a free to view 10 hour Head for the Hills Festival. In partnership with Bury Council and United We Stream the event reached 35,000 audiences globally. The event included live art installations impacting on local communities in Ramsbottom while providing high quality arts and music content.

With support from Bury Council we enabled amateur and voluntary organisations to reach their audiences online with Christmas performances. Our Christmas Community Streams across December included live Christmas concerts from Bury Parish Church, Youth Dance and Theatre School Performances in The Met and a pre-Christmas celebration in the spirit of coming through 2020 together in "Very Bury Christmas".

We continued with our music programme including the likes of McGoldrick, Breabach and While & Matthews and as lockdown once again was announced in late December we pivoted to a digital programme with "Artists from Anywhere" as a regular hosted "in conversation" and concert with international artists weekly. We supported the development of a new online channel with SoundON and developed our own regular "emerging showcase" streamed from The Met monthly January to March.

We hosted digital theatre experiences which saw families engaged in immersive narrative led experiences both in their homes and in local parks through a time when social activity was difficult and restricted. Although challenging for online audiences at this time we had success with streams by Lip Service, Elephant Sessions, and the ongoing Artist from Anywhere & Emerging Showcases series.

We continued to be proactive partners within Greater Manchester networks – notably the GM LGBT Arts and Culture Group in commissioning and supporting artists to develop new work which was suitable for "hybrid" (online and in person) Greater Manchester Prides planned for early in 2021/22.

As restrictions eased, we took opportunities to bring audiences back to The Met. In August we hosted a live stream in partnership with Komedia where socially distanced members in The Met enjoyed watching streamed content as an audience for the first time since March. In October we took advantage of a small window of relaxed regulations to allow family audiences in for half term.

Workshops and Outreach

Much of 2020-21 saw our workshop groups managing the disruption to their normal delivery caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although this was a traumatic time for most, our groups and their facilitators showed amazing strength, resilience and creativity during this period in starting online delivery in April and supporting members to access online where needed. Met Express (our drama group for people with disabilities) used their Facebook page to share images and stories and focused an online 'Advent Calendar' project around this in December. Bury Youth Theatre managed to get approval from comedian Alex Horne to run their own Taskmaster project and grew their membership including adding a brand-new Juniors group in Spring 2021. Aiming High took part in regular skills sessions and, when able to return to the venue as a 'support group', quickly started work on a video project for the 2021 Happy Festival.

Working partnership with Walk the Plank and Manchester's Indian Association, we delivered part of the 'Digital Diwali' event in November 2020. This involved the delivery of over 250 lantern-making packs to families across the borough.

We were also able to support families with a Christmas 'Show in a Box' that we shared out through community networks including Bury Youth Service, Enterprising Youth and Homestart.

We connected with the National Citizen Service team delivering in Bury and held an online 'social action challenge' session in October half term 2020 where young people collected and shared information about how young people engage with our offer.

We were able to hold both a Drama Summer School and October half term Drama Day in between lockdowns, both of which were attended by 15 young people within the capacity we were allowed to work with at the time.



United We Stream

United We Stream GM was launched on 3 April by Night-Time Economy Adviser Sacha Lord and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. The Met was a proud partner and host venue for the project, with the UWS team producing 207 hours of streaming entertainment while based at The Met across 35 different productions in its first iteration.

The ethos for United We Stream GM was to fundraise by providing quality and diverse entertainment from established and breakthrough Greater Manchester-centric talent, while encouraging people to stay in their own homes during the pandemic.

The impressive stats show that 7.5 million people worldwide watched events featuring 338 different performers from a variety of locations. While there were many performances beamed in from DJs and musician's homes, The Met was a production hub for the GMCA Culture Team, University of Salford's ICZ Media Production, Badger & Combes, and Modern English Digital who came together to create a formidable live-streaming team. But we were also able to do what we do best, with live music, comedy and performance coming direct from The Met's main theatre with sound and light run by our own Technical Manager.

Due to the success of the project, UWS returned to The Met for Christmas 2020. The decision was made following the government's announcement of a second national lockdown, and growing concern about the rapid decline in mental health throughout the region.

The project concluded with over 4 million people worldwide attending The Met on New Years Eve as United We Stream took the Hacienda Twenty-Four Hour House Party to a global audience, broadcast live. Viewers raved into 2021 enjoying all genres of house music, tuning in from far and wide across the world including: The Balkans, New Zealand, Romania, Poland, Australia, Canada, France, Netherlands, Japan, Hungary, Germany, Singapore, Portugal, Thailand, Norway, USA, Brazil, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the U.K.



“We’re so proud of what we’ve been able to achieve as part of United We Stream in 2020. This event shows all the best parts of the collaboration that has endured this year; the partnership with United We Stream and The Hacienda, the wonderful artists who contributed their time and skills, and The Met staff behind the scenes working alongside the UWS broadcast team from Badger & Combes have once again delivered something incredible.

The reach and impact of this event is huge. We hope everyone in Bury takes the same pride we do in knowing their local venue has helped bring enjoyment to an audience around the world at this time.”

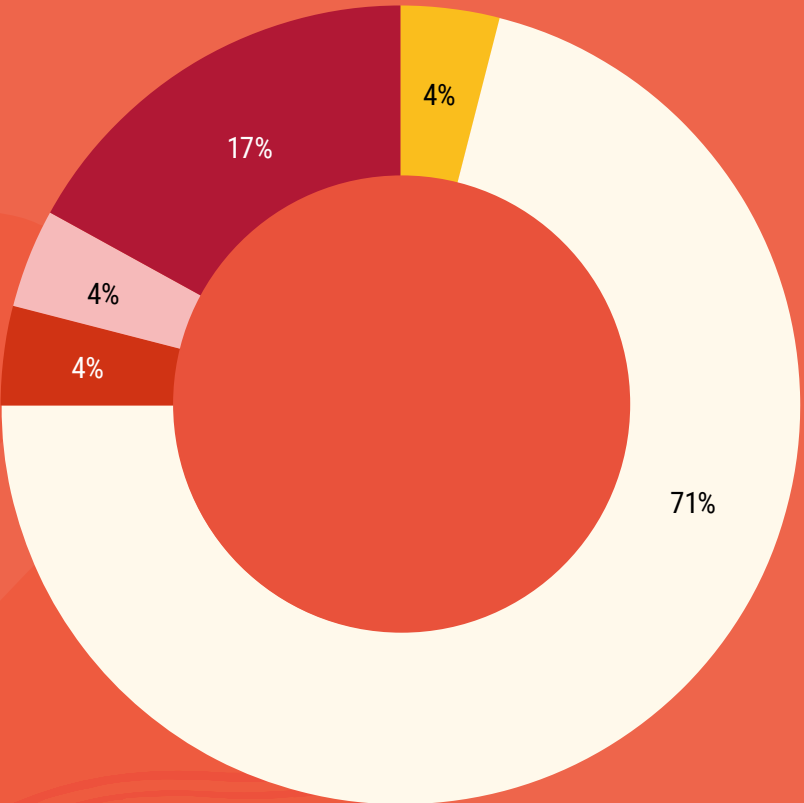
Victoria Robinson – The Met, CEO

Recording and digital projects

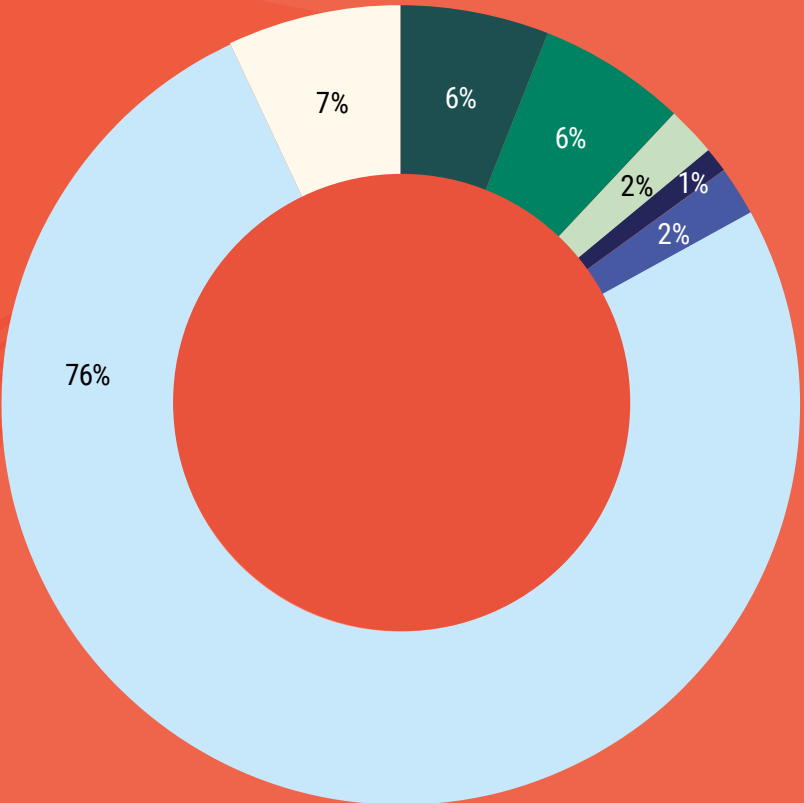
Edwin Street Recording Studio continued to work throughout lockdown on our streaming programme and on live recording. The Studio produced The Slow Readers Club, 91 Days in Isolation, which was written remotely and recorded immediately after lockdown. The album, released in 2020, was a top 40 Charting Album. The studio also produced Demons of Ruby Mae Album, which is yet to be named or released. Other commercial work by the studio included recording artist Lucy Thomas who reached 25 million views on YouTube. It also recorded for Unity House, one of our in-house creative businesses resident in the Creative Hub, for broadcast on Sky Arts.

Statistics

Expenditure Sources

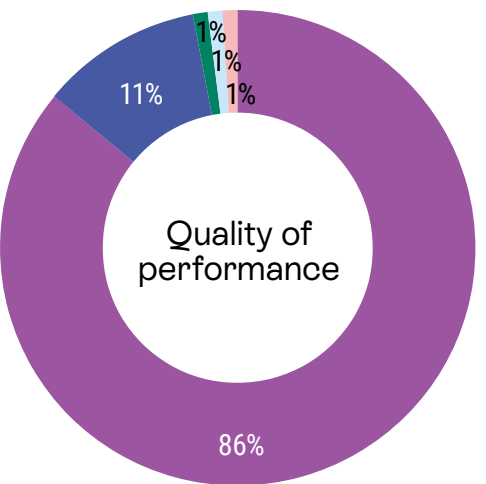
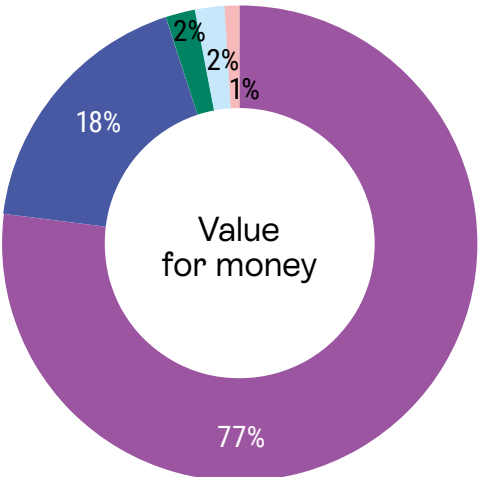
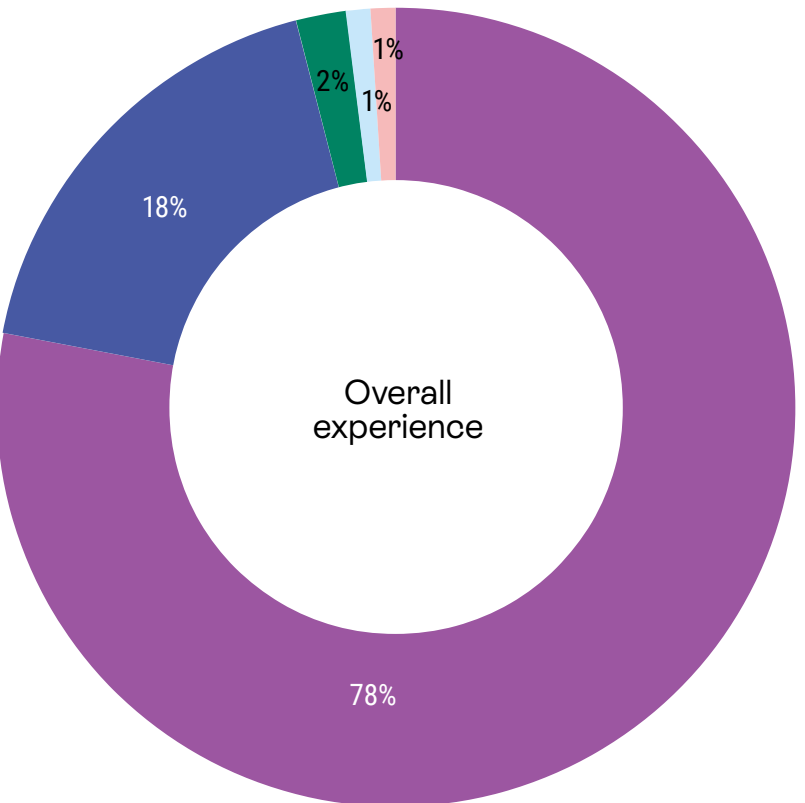


Income Sources

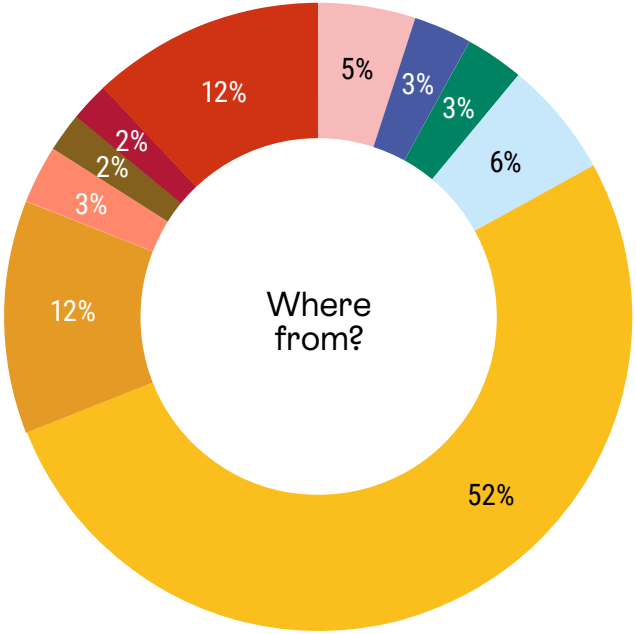
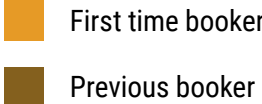
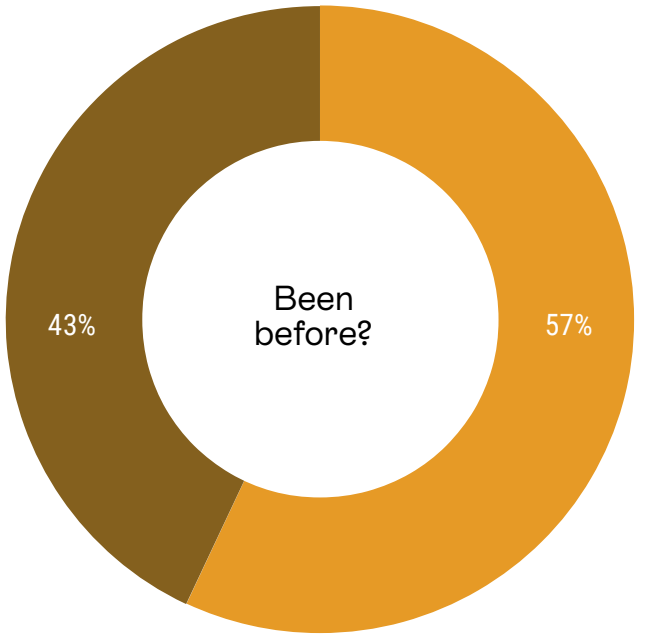


All percentages are approximate.
Source: Audience Finder Survey report,
The Met Box Office data.

Audience Experience



Who booked tickets?



With thanks to our key funders, Arts Council England and Bury Council for their core funding support. In 2019/20 we also welcomed support from Children in Need and The Oglesby Charitable Trust in support of our outreach and participation programmes.

Thanks to The Garfield Weston Foundation who granted funds to help us develop the overall organisation in this year, and also thanks to our Corporate Members and Patrons.

Major Donors:

Ian Warburton

Patrons:

Noreen Kershaw, Mark Potter, Ian Warburton, Tony Walsh, John Banbury

Headline Members:

Jean Tarry, Julie Halliwell, Mr & Mrs Neil Kirby, Jim Hurst, Ken Punshon, Jacqueline Halstead, Nick Halstead, Yael Eardley-Dutton, Shefali Henry, Lawrence Johnson

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