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The Met

Annual Report

2021 / 2022



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The Met Annual Report 2021/22

The global pandemic continued to be a challenge for The Met, with enforced closure until July 2021. We were delighted to see the return of live events in August, with significant work being done on protecting all visitors, including staff members, to the building.

We continued to deliver our excellent and diverse programme whilst following guidelines and maintaining social distancing throughout the building. The staff team and volunteers worked exceptionally hard to make it feel safe. Through these prudent safety measures, we saw audience confidence and numbers increase throughout the year.

September 2021 saw the first ever Burrs Live, a two-week residency at Burrs Country Park which also included two days for the return of the much-loved Head for the Hills festival.

Edwin Street Recording Studio worked for much of the year on collaborations. This included work on developing artists Jason Andrew and Cheddar Gorgeous through the LGBT Arts and Culture Network Arts; our resident artist Yan Tan Tethera and continuing developing the Sound On project with several young bands. Slow Readers Club and Demons of Ruby Mae continued to work with the studio, recording and mixing. Urban Theory, a band that we have supported for much of this year recorded some of their work and the studio and benefitted from our mentoring.

The Met continues to benefit from the support from Bury Council, Arts Council England and GMCA. We would also like to thank the many corporate and private funders of The Met during the year. All financial support is truly valued and allowed us to remain resilient throughout this challenging period.

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

464

individuals participated in our workshop programme over the year, spanning over 325 individual workshops.

We generated

£338,364

of income through ticket sales

Sold a total of

20,530

tickets

We hosted

225

events

Programme Highlights

April through to June 2021 saw a progression of the Met's artistic programme with learning from our digital work in 2020 testing audience's appetite for online content. Emerging showcases, Sound ON digital channel, Bury Pride (and Pride Stages commissions), and "Artists from Anywhere" all were well received and played a useful role in maintaining our global reach for audiences – and for audiences not yet ready for in person cultural experience. Our work with Pride Stages resulted in over 1200 views of the Bury Pride Online including new work by Cheddar Gorgeous and Jason Guest developed in partnership with Waterside, Sale as art of the Greater Manchester LGBTQ+ Arts & Culture Network.

The physical programme within the venue had been paused for some time and was realised from May – while considering social distancing up to July. Happy Festival created a hybrid digital and in person programme. The socially distanced shows were weekly from May through to July including Belshazzers Feast, John Bramwell, Don Letts, Hannah White, Catrin Finch & Seckou Keita, Family shows, First Thursday Comedy Club, Gary Delany and Martin Harley.

Our autumn season got off to a strong start with Burrs Live creating much needed opportunity for artists, suppliers and audience. Development of new audiences led the programme for Burrs Live with Bootleg Beatles as a stand-out success. Head for the Hills continued on its 2 year research and development with lessons learned from the digital version in 2020 creating the intimate

and immersive festival experience made possible in Burrs Country Park. The lead in time for the event was problematic and compromised programme and audiences but was an impressive project at this stage in pandemic recovery.

As we progressed through the autumn season – a season populated with reschedules we started to find capacity to revisit programme and artistic ambitions from 2019 and begin to plan again with the hindsight of the new partnerships and audience engaged through lockdown and online projects. The venue programme was strong and shows which effectively had been on sale for more than 12 months did well for audiences relative to the national picture. Audience response for emerging artist as part of our studio programme was low. A commissioned show with The Sunday Boys and Katy Rose Bennett in Bury Parish Church was a highlight funded through GM LGBTQI Arts and Culture network.

As we built back the live programme we struggled to find space for the digital. Sound On continued but with less consistency – and less online engagement as a result. Revive Live (Music Venue Trust) gave us some underplay shows in January with average audience response but through February and March we began to realise a healthy audience response to strong programme.

We were thrilled to show a community touring theatre programme delayed from April 2020 with "The Last Pub Quiz". The tour sold out – as it had been heading towards in 2020 which gave confidence towards a constructive way forward from a complex but creative year of work.

Audiences for 2021/22

Audiences continued to be a challenge for us throughout 21/22. The Met reopened its doors in July 2021 to a programme of socially distanced performances throughout the summer and saw audience confidence and numbers increase through this period. While 21/22 saw a 31% decrease in ticket sales when compared to pre-covid levels, we saw a steady increase in sales throughout the year. Additionally, Burrs live did much to re-engage audiences and provided a covid safe, outdoor programme for audiences new and old alike.

We also continued to engage online audiences through our digital programme including Bury Pride and SoundON.

Total bookers

6325

Average party size

2.3

Education and Learning

Workshop groups and Holiday Clubs

Workshop groups have been able to experience their first full year back in face-to-face delivery from September 2021 meaning all groups have performed shows to public audiences this year. Bury Youth Theatre's Juniors group continues to go from strength to strength and the Seniors group returned to perform a classic pantomime, Dick Whittington to a sold-out audience in December. Aiming High and Met Express have also been delighted to welcome audiences back to see their work, sharing new shows in Spring 2021. Metro Jazz returned in 2021, as did Mat Walklate's popular Harmonica lessons.

In October 2021 we added a new regular group to our workshop provision with the start of 'Meet Me at The Met', a social arts club for over 50s. The group meets weekly to take part in a range of taster workshops across artforms including drama, music, arts and crafts. We have also run a series of successful Holiday Club projects throughout the year. Our Summer School and Half Term Drama Days continue to attract between fifteen and twenty children each time, all of whom love the chance to create their own shows and share them with parents.

In Summer 2021, with the support of Curious Minds 'Bubble Up' programme, we ran a week-long multi-arts project with Brandlesholme Community Centre, drawing upon dance, drama and music to engage local children. We also supported the centre, Springs Community Project and Bury Council's Looked After Children with additional arts provision as part of the Holiday Activity and Food fund.

The Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) scheme has become a major part of our calendar, enabling us to establish new projects for young people on free school meals each school holiday. This has ranged from supporting community organisations with arts provision, providing free places to our existing holiday clubs and our biggest experiment to date, running a Christmas HAF programme from an empty shop unit in Millgate Shopping Centre.



Community, Sector and Partner Engagement

Bury's Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) has continued to develop its strategic focus and links to other services and governance frameworks within the council. In early 2022 we had the opportunity to support a Kickstart placement through Curious Minds.

Our Creative Case for Diversity Steering Group continued to meet on a regular basis to share ideas and develop projects. We ran a further Hate Crime Awareness event in Autumn 2021 with 94 students from Philips High School joining us over two days to take part in workshops with Bury Blind Society, Communic8te and Bury Active Women's Centre.

We supported the Comino Foundation with an event in December 2021, bringing together young people from across 5 different schools across Greater Manchester to share dance, poetry and activism that they created as part of the Ripples of Hope Programme.

Project Work

Working in partnership with Walk the Plank and Manchester's Indian Association, we brought in-person workshops and a parade to Bury for Diwali in October 2021. Workshops included lantern-making and storytelling and dancers and musicians helped to illuminate the streets in celebration.

Our partnership project with Bury Council's Children in Care Council culminated in October 2021 with the sharing of the final audio piece and its sharing with friends, family and stakeholders. This piece has now gone on to be used as part of the training programme for social workers and new foster carers.

The Seldom Heard Voices project began in October 2021 with a series of community workshops in Bury Market exploring local people's engagement with green spaces and the natural environment. We then began working with the Friendship Circle, BAME Project Walking Group and lead project partners ADAB to enable them to work with artists to create new work around those themes.

We ran a Get Started In Music project with Princes Trust in February 2021, something that we had planned to do before the pandemic. Led by artist Liam Frost, this project brought 10 young people aged 18-24 together to write music and hear from industry professionals.

We once again engaged with the Bury National Citizenship Service to run a social action challenge in Summer 2021 which encouraged the young people to develop ideas around what Young People's Membership of The Met would look like.

Burrs Live

In September 2021, we were delighted to be able to bring Burrs Live to Burrs Country Park, a two-week festival which included the return of Head for the Hills.

The concept was an outdoor cultural space with activity spanning two weeks, providing a way to encourage people back to live events in a safe environment. It was ultimately aimed to improve people's wellbeing through connection with nature, culture, and each other. The programme was curated, staged and promoted by The Met and incorporated a community programme alongside live music and comedy aimed at reaching a broad audience.

As part of Bury Town of Culture's offer, it involved cultural partners from across Greater Manchester Combined Authority's cultural portfolio, building towards their planned reopening from September, and supporting the early stage of their post-lockdown recovery.

The festival included Bootleg Beatles, The Magic of Motown, Head of the Hills and Happy Fest.

64%

of bookers were from the borough of Bury

2%

of all bookers were from Bury wards which are amongst the top 20% most deprived neighborhoods in the country

50%

of bookers were new to The Met

Across the festival, we sold

2777

tickets



“Attending an outside local event was wonderful - the weather was a plus plus side - the sound was amazing very well organised, well done!”

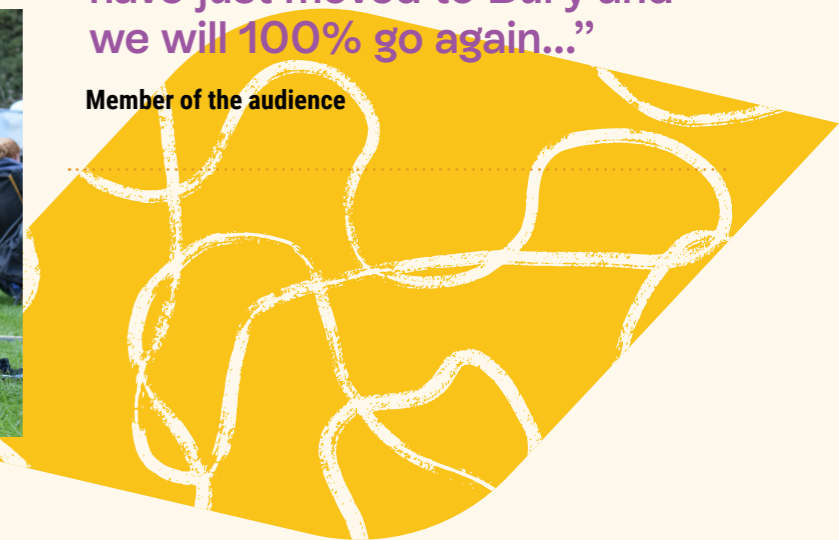
Member of the audience

“The volunteers were extremely kind and helpful and a big plus to this first 'out of lockdown' experience.”

Member of the audience

“It was amazing! The first time we have been as we have just moved to Bury and we will 100% go again...”

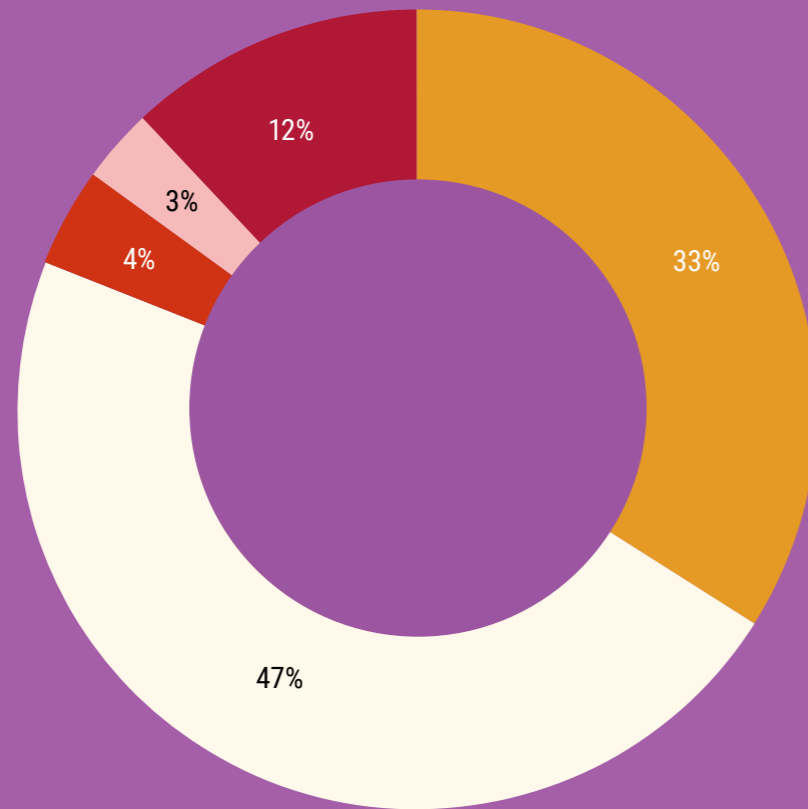
Member of the audience



Statistics

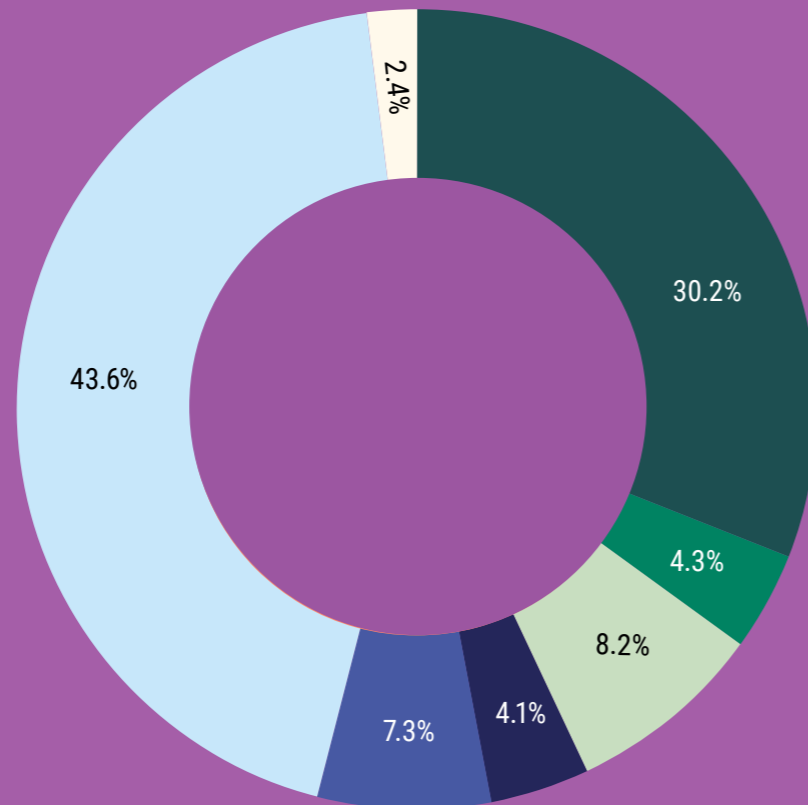
Expenditure Sources

- Artist costs
- Staff costs
- Outreach and Education
- Infrastructure
- Other



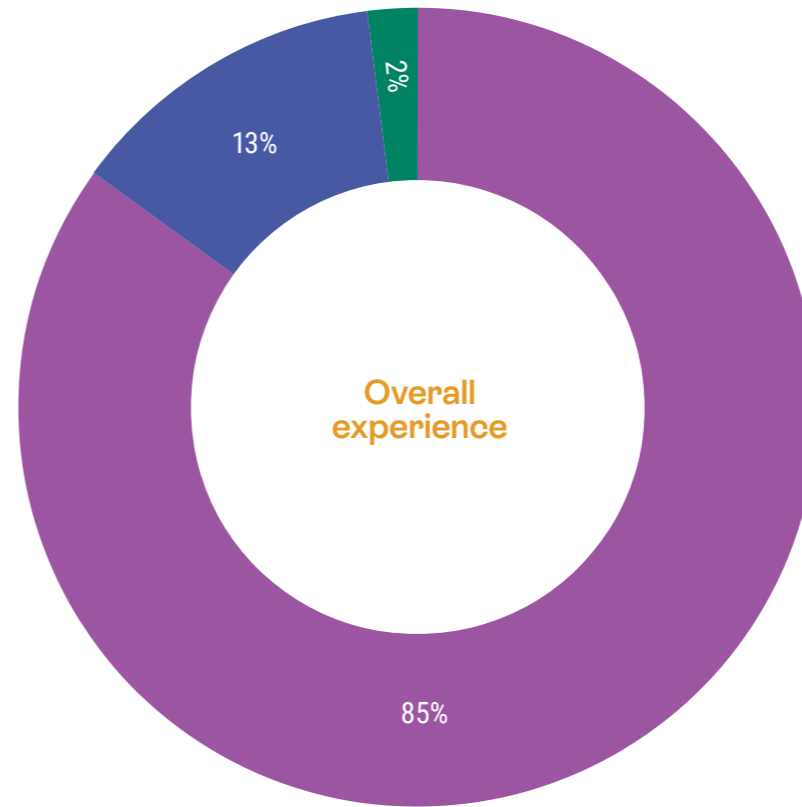
Income Sources

- Ticket and income hires
- Donations
- Sponsorship
- Catering
- Outreach and education
- Grants
- Other

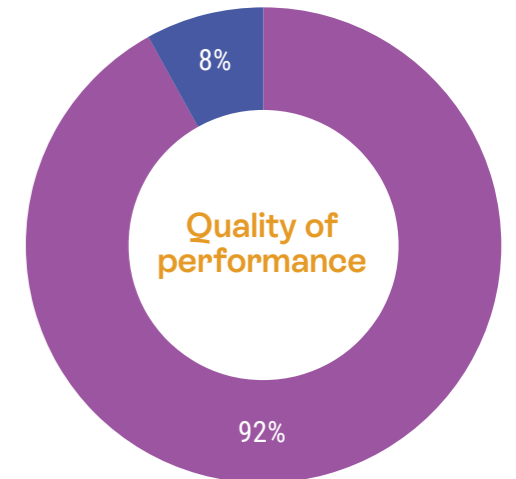
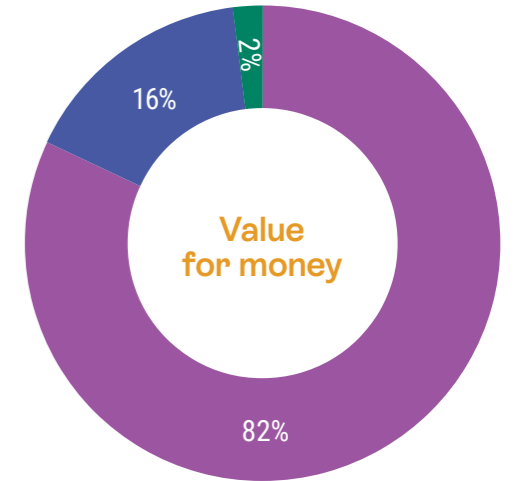


All percentages are approximate.
Source: Audience Finder Survey report, The Met Box Office data.

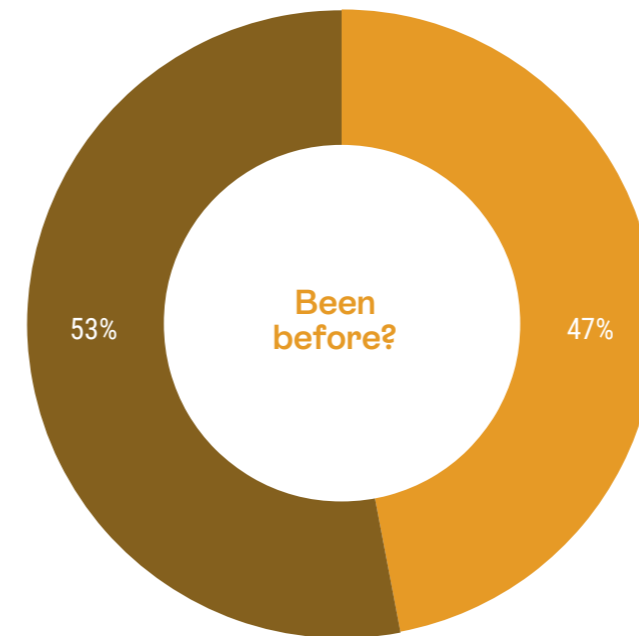
Audience Experience



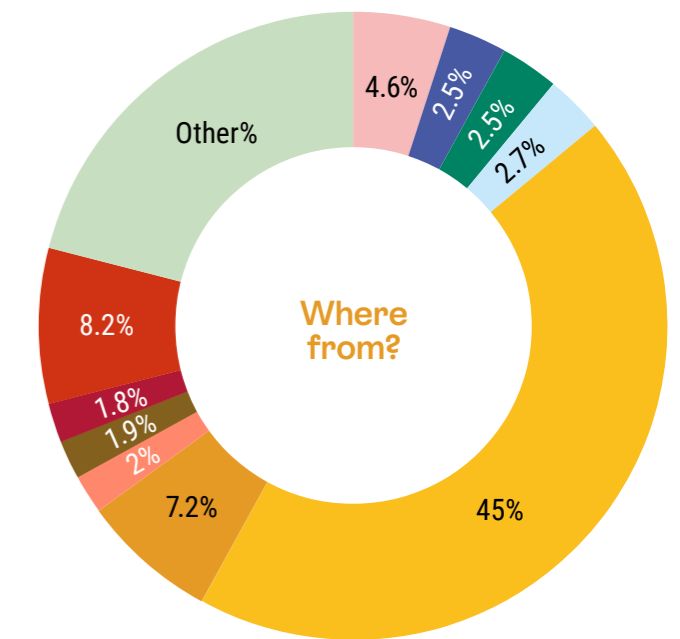
- Very Good
- Good
- Neither good nor poor
- Poor
- Very poor



Who booked tickets?



- First time booker
- Previous booker



- Bury
- Bolton
- Rochdale
- Stockport
- Manchester
- Trafford
- Salford
- Wigan
- Tameside
- Other

With thanks to our key funders, Arts Council England, GMCA and Bury Council for their core funding support.

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