

World of Song Project Outline

Manchester is experiencing a significant movement of people and migration into the city. Refugees, asylum seekers, and new migrants bring with them many rich heritage stories, which interweave and merge with the heritage of the city. Through several projects, we want to capture these stories and celebrate heritage through the medium of song.

We will be working in partnership with Community Arts Northwest (CAN), who have experience working with these communities, and combining their knowledge and relationships with many groups across Manchester with our facilities and expertise.

Many of these people do not have access to mainstream cultural or heritage arts provisions, and their heritage does not seem valued by the society they have entered. Our aim is to try and address many of these barriers to participation and celebrate the ways in which migrant heritage is vital to the core of Manchester's identity.

The project, including planning, will take place over 2 years.

World of Song: Project by Project

Without Borders Youth Band

This is for young people aged 13-18 from new migrant communities, who will be given the opportunity to meet weekly to rehearse and develop a band. They will have a permanent music leader to mentor them and visiting facilitators with expertise in different aspects of music creation and the industry itself to help support their development, and to give them an overview of the music industry in the UK.

We will recruit a music leader June-July before recruiting participants over August and September, before beginning weekly workshop sessions in October.

They will have 6 months' worth of sessions and rehearsals, before the opportunity to visit a professional recording studio to record their own music in April 2025. They will then work with a filmmaker to create content – either a music video or similar during June/July. After a break over August, weekly sessions will resume in September with an additional content/filming day in Jan-Feb 2026.

Professional Development Programme for Heritage Artists

This project is an extensive professional development programme for three ensembles/bands who perform music from their cultural heritage. We will work with the selected musicians over a 12-month period to shine a light on their music and heritage and interweave this heritage into the rich tapestry of Manchester's culture. The UK music industry is famously difficult to navigate and for musicians who have arrived in the UK, there are many more barriers they face such as language, cultural norms and how musician's work compared to the places they previously have worked in.

Over the summer we will schedule professional development days and guest speakers to come and work with artists, as well as advertising the opportunity and select three ensembles or bands of musicians to professional development days. 10 guest speakers will be assigned to deliver sessions over the 12-month period, covering a variety of topics.

Where possible, these opportunities will be opened up to other musicians being supported by CAN. This project will also allow CAN to develop their own knowledge of the UK music industry and as a result help shape their support with future artists. CAN work regularly with a wide range of artists and help with their artist development.

Alongside these opportunities, a photographer will work with these groups at the beginning of the project in October, and towards the end of 2024 these groups will have the opportunity to spend 3 days in a professional studio to record a demo. The start of 2025 will see the groups receive mentoring from an online branding specialist to help create promotional print material, as well as organising for a filmmaker to work with the groups to create promotional videos.

This project will give artist the chance to deliver professional public performances. In March 2025 there will be a Showcase Performance at Band on the Wall as part of the English Folk Expo – an annual music showcase event run by Sound Roots, a charity which hosts festivals and events throughout the year to introduce the best folk, roots and acoustic music to new and existing audiences. Over 200 industry representatives will gather in Manchester to see more than 60 artists perform over 3 days.

This project will culminate with artists performing at the Horizons Festival (another project which is listed below)! April-June 2025 will give artists a paid residency commission to create new music for a show called ‘World of Songs’ during the festival, which takes place during Refugee Week. Rehearsal spaces will be made available at BOTW prior to performance.

Early Years Provision for Refugee and Asylum Seeker Families

Our Early Years programme is one of our most successful projects from our previous ‘Keep on Moving’ NLHF project and has continued with weekly sessions. This project sees our Music Leader, Jolanta Livesey, bring her successful sensory music and movement classes to emergency accommodation or a suitable alternative. Alongside an assistant, Jolanta will travel to these hotels from late 2024-September 2025. Then, these sessions will continue exclusively for recently arrived migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, but this time at BOTW’s learning space. After an appropriate time, families will be encouraged to attend other sessions which will be open to the public, to create mixed participation. One of the great successes of our current Early Years offering is the social aspect for parents, and sessions may encourage families living in emergency accommodation to meet families living around Greater Manchester.

Mother Song, Father Song Sharing Sessions

During 2025, drop-in sessions will be organised to support new arrivals, asylum seekers, people with recent refugee status and host community participants to share songs and music.

Before these begin, we will source locations and make arrangements with venues in advance, as well as recruiting music leaders and Early Years’ Assistants, before promoting the activity to potential audiences. We will recruit 2 Music Leaders (singers) as well as Early Years Assistants. A barrier to participation may be parents not wanting to be separated from their young children, so these assistants can provide art or quiet play activities in part of the room within sight of parents, to allow them to participate in the activity.

We will provide instruments such as guitars, percussion and keyboards, as well as a selection of other traditional instruments. We will also provide refreshments.

We will create an opportunity for anyone who is interested in documenting their song on camera to do so, creating a digital resource for sharing heritage. The filming would take place later, to deter participants from feeling any pressure during sessions.

Songs and Stories – Heritage Film

We wish to engage a filmmaker alongside 30 participants comprising of musicians and interviewees to create a film exploring and highlighting the music of people who have come to the city as migrants, refugees or asylum seekers, utilising the filming done during the World of Songs projects, as well as archive film, including that of CAN. We will utilise BOTW's event filming expertise and AV studio infrastructure to help create this.

The film will include both live footage taken from both the broader project and BOTW's broader programme, when there is a relevant connection to the premise of the project. The narrative will explore the commonality between different migrant experiences, both across communities and through time, exploring historic references that depict the migrant experience throughout Manchester's history. The films will include interviews with 1st generation migrants from recent decades, alongside the most recent wave of asylum seekers and project participants.

Context will be provided through a programme of live performances, community activities and animations, and this allows artists an opportunity to discuss and explain the heritage, traditions and lived experiences that have informed their creative practice. Previous work with Images & Co has shown us that animations are a useful tool to provide further context and interpretation in an easy-to-understand format that transfers well to young people, or as a first level of engagement with casually interested members of the public. We will distribute through the various BOTW digital platforms, as well as on our highly acclaimed display screens on the exterior of the venue. We have had considerable traction with many of our informative films over the years and are confident that these films will have considerable international reach.

This project will be led by an early career freelance filmmaker, with assistance from further volunteer filmmakers with an interest in cultural heritage. We will use our Media Club to engage filmmakers, who already regularly volunteer with filming at BOTW. A filmmaker will be engaged towards the end of 2024 and production of content will begin in 2025. We aim to launch the film on our external displays from November 2025 as well as online.

Horizons Festival – Celebration Event

CAN and BOTW will co-produce a celebration event as part of Refugee Week, including showcases involving the participants from the overall project. We aim to have 400 attendees and will target audiences from Manchester's new communities involved in the new arrivals programme as well as other host communities. We also wish to target music and cultural promoters from independent and mainstream organisations, festival organisers and other potential projects who are looking to diversify their programmes of work.

The event will take place in June 2025, with promotion of the event and preparations/rehearsals happening from early 2025.