



building theatre-making in somerset

Handbook 2017



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ENGLAND**



Hello!

Thank you for your interest in **BARN**. Over the next few pages we will explain what it is, how it works and how it might support you and your work.

We’re thrilled that **BARN** is happening and wish to thank our colleagues at the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for their confidence in our shared aspirations for building theatre-making in Somerset.

Sarah & Mark, Co-Directors of Theatre, Take Art

April 2017

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What is BARN?

BARN is a three-year theatre initiative (2017-19) that supports Somerset's emerging theatre-making sector to develop, test and showcase new work in a predominantly rural context.

Why is BARN needed?

Historically, Somerset's theatre infrastructure is both idiosyncratic and fragile. Real, grassroots issues have often hindered individuals and companies from remaining resilient, fed, connected and supported.

BARN is the first stage of a long-term development process, offering a programme of interventions that are needed now. We have rigorously tested our plans with theatre-makers and other professional colleagues across the county to ensure those needs are met.

What does BARN do?

BARN resources theatre-makers to take risks, build resilience and sustain your practice, artistically and financially. It does this by nurturing emerging work, providing support and safe places for ideas to incubate, grow and flourish. It should give you confidence to make choices about what your work looks like. This ownership, we hope, will help to drive sustainability.

How does BARN do this?

BARN features several activity strands that include

- an Ideas Fund;
- Research and Development Residencies;
- Work in Progress Events;
- Showcase Platforms;
- an annual BARNFest;
- Access and Business Support;
- Progression and Signposting to other Opportunities.



BARN-Raising

BARN is inspired by the North American rural tradition of barn-raising: ‘the collective action of a community coming together to build, or rebuild, a barn’.



BARN is a three-year initiative. If, between us, we get it right, Somerset’s theatre infrastructure will be in a different place by 2020. Along the way, we plan to listen, learn, adapt and work with you to address the most pressing needs in the most effective way.

Inevitably we may make mistakes, but we’ll learn from them and make changes as we go along.

We’ve recently seen several green shoots emerge. We’re proud to part of this growing sector, inhabited by generous theatre-makers who support each others’ work and want to thrive.

Let’s RAISE THE BARN together!



Key Features

- supports the making of new theatre in a predominantly rural context;
- represents a range of small, but meaningful, strategic interventions;
- focuses on work of different scales* to meet the diverse needs of theatre-makers and audiences;
- encourages collective action;
- connects theatre-makers across the county, through regular activity networking and peer support;
- enables theatre-makers to create their own pathways through the different strands;
- offers flexibility, recognising that not everyone is at the same stage of the creative process or needs all the activity;
- values audience involvement in the making process;
- offers different ways to build critical mass eg ideas fund, platforms and progression opportunities.

* with a particular focus on supporting small-scale, touring theatre

Where we're coming from

As much as we'd like to, we won't be able to support every project financially. But, at the very least, we will do our best to offer advice, broker relationships and signpost you to other opportunities.

Developing new work is risky. Though we'd love to see every project flourish, we know that not all of them will. As **BARN** supports risk as well as the right to fail, we will do our best to provide safe spaces where risks can be taken. Even if your project strays from its original intentions, we will help you to learn from the experience and move on positively.

We aim to be as application-lite as possible. But we also need to be accountable to the decisions we make as stewards of Esmée Fairbairn's funding. We want to support specific opportunities, rather than try and be all things to all people. Yet we want to keep the net wide, so that these opportunities are available to any theatre-makers in Somerset.

We want to support as much as we can. But we also need to manage expectations and not over-promise.



Plans for 2017: Expression of Interest

We think a good way to identify how **BARN** can be most effective is through conversation. So we're inviting people to complete an **Expression of Interest** that outlines your plans for the next 8 to 12 months. Based on this information, we will invite you to have a chat with us. Through dialogue, other ideas may emerge and hopefully we can use our knowledge and experience to add value to your work in the best possible way.

There's little point in us fixing a date for a Work in Progress event, for example, if no one has work they want to share at that time! So we anticipate a period of a few weeks when we will be batting ideas back and forth.

Likewise, in our original project plan, we proposed a certain number of R&D residencies, Work in Progress Events, Showcase Platforms and Training Events a year. In practice, we may find that the balance of activity needs to shift. For example, rather than offering financial support for two R&D residencies a year, we may be able to redeploy resources and offer more.

The **Expression of Interest** form can be downloaded from our website:

<http://www.takeart.org/projects/entry/barn>

The deadline for submission for 2017 is 8 May 2017.

The exceptions to this process are:

- The Ideas Fund requires a simple application form
- We will solicit and curate work for **BARNFest**

If during the course of the year (after the Expression of Interest deadline) you have a project that you'd like to discuss with us, we'll be open to having a conversation as part of our ongoing professional development programme.

Whether we will be able to support it as part of the **BARN** initiative will depend on how resources have been allocated.

Timeframe for 2017

- Expression of Interest deadline: 8 May 2017
- Informal conversations around supporting work: May / June 2017
- R&D, Work in Progress, Showcase Events: June to November 2017
- Ideas Fund Round 2 deadline: 24 July 2017
- BARNFest: October 2017 (date to be confirmed)
- Training Events, Professional Support and Signposting: ongoing



Criteria

Although we don't want to limit the scope, imagination and creativity of your ideas, there are several criteria that we will take into consideration:

- Are you living, or making work, in Somerset?
- How will the project address your professional and/or artistic development needs?
- How will the project enable you to sustain your practice, artistically and financially, longer term?
- Does the work strive for excellence with high aesthetic values?
- What element of risk is involved: artistic, financial? How could that be supported and/or mitigated?
- Does the project represent a truly collaborative approach?
- Does the work demonstrate potential to become tour-ready?
- How might audiences be involved in the making process?
- What is the likelihood of the project happening without BARN's support? Are there other opportunities that are more appropriate?
- Collectively, do the projects offer a geographical spread across Somerset?

ACTIVITY STRANDS

Ideas Fund

The Ideas Fund aims to support 1) ideas and projects that create the potential for new work and 2) professional skills development. It acts as a stepping-stone to enable you to benefit from other BARN activity strands, eg Work in Progress events. We anticipate offering £50 to £250 in each round to successful applicants.

The next Ideas Fund round will open on Monday 19th June with a deadline of 5pm on Monday 24th July 2017.

Research and Development Residencies

BARN will support opportunities for theatre-makers to develop a new idea or way of working. Each residency will be tailored to the needs of the selected



individual or company. We will support budgets of up to £1,250 that could be used to pay for venue hire, travel expenses, accommodation, production costs or to use as match for further funding.

Each Residency will conclude with a Work in Progress Event to which peers, promoters and rural audiences will be invited to offer constructive feedback.

Work in Progress Events

In addition to the above, we will programme other Work in Progress Events, linked and organised with venues and village halls in Somerset, providing opportunities for work to be shared and tested with peers, promoters and rural audiences.

Showcase Platforms

We will programme Showcase Platforms of tour-ready work targeted at an audience of village hall promoters, arts centres, theatres, festival promoters and theatre-makers. This may take the form of a double bill of new work made in Somerset and/or supported through the 303 initiative (see page 9 for more information about 303).

BARNFest

Targeted at makers and their peers, promoters, theatres and arts centres, **BARNFest** is an annual, small-scale festival to celebrate theatre in Somerset and the South West. It will feature:

- showcase performances of work made in Somerset and/or supported through the 303 initiative;
- a panel of theatre professionals (eg makers, producers, promoters) to stimulate lively debate around best practice in contemporary theatre;
- an opportunity for recipients of the Ideas Fund to raise the profile of the work they've created;
- peer networking, learning and sharing.

Individuals/companies invited to perform at Work in Progress Events, Showcase Platforms and BARNFest will be offered a modest budget to cover some production costs and travel.



ONGOING ACTIVITY

Access and Business Support

We're mindful that some theatre-makers require **access support** such as assistance in writing applications; supervision to make work or physical access needs at platform events. We've allocated a budget for this activity and would be very happy to have a conversation with anyone requiring additional support. We will programme several **training events** each year in developing business skills, such as producing, business planning, budgeting or managing sustainability. They will be promoted on our website and via our mailing list. Please let us know if there are any particular areas you would like us to cover.

Progression and Signposting

Although we're not able to support touring costs, we can

- broker relationships between theatre-makers, presenters and promoters to develop performance opportunities in Somerset eg rural touring scheme; InspirED education programme; and Somerset venue partners;
- signpost to other progression opportunities (festivals, funding, producers, training, networking events) regionally and nationally.

Where appropriate, we'll work with regional and national partners to extend touring opportunities beyond Somerset.

We also have allocated time to offer advice on funding applications (including Grants for the Arts), particularly if you wish to use them as match funding for any support (actual or in kind) you may receive through **BARN**.

303 Initiative

303 is an import/export programme to facilitate the transition of companies between the South West and London. Other partners in the initiative include The Bike Shed, Exeter; Beaford Arts, North Devon; and Proteus, Basingstoke. We aim to create a touring circuit where theatre-makers supported by each of the organisations through their existing schemes (in our case, **BARN**) can then tour throughout the South West to various venues in rural and suburban locations, using the A303 as the inspiration for that route.

Our priority at the moment is to support theatre-makers, not already connected into networks, who would benefit from signposting and relationship brokering.



FAQs

Who will BARN support?

BARN is for anyone with a demonstrable commitment to theatre-making in Somerset; who aspires to grow and sustain their practice, artistically and financially; wants to work collectively with other professional colleagues and audiences to build the county's theatre infrastructure; and buys into the spirit of **BARN**'s intentions.

What do you mean by 'emerging'?

By 'emerging', we are referring to the theatre-making sector in Somerset, not individuals or companies.

How do you define theatre and theatre-maker?

This is self-defining. If, having read about the initiative, you feel that there is a good fit for you and/or your project, then we'll be happy to hear from you.

Is BARN an artist development scheme?

Maybe, who knows? Fundamentally, BARN addresses what's needed in Somerset at the moment. It supports the making of new work as well as the people doing the making. We want to create sustainability both for this work and the makers' practice, artistically and financially.

Why involve audiences in the making process?

By being part of the creative process, audiences and promoters are able to engage with the work at an early stage and feel more inclined to support it when it tours. In developing a relationship with the theatre-maker, they invest their own ideas and energy. In that sense, they become great advocates for the work, thereby contributing to the value and sustainability of the sector.

What sort of venues will BARN work with?

We have identified a number of venues and promoters (theatres and arts centres as well as village halls) who would be willing to support R&D, showcase platforms etc.



Who are Sarah and Mark?

Sarah Peterkin, Rural Touring Director and Theatre Co-Director since 1991, has significant knowledge and experience of rural arts practice.

Mark Helyar, Co-Director of Theatre since 2009, has significant experience in strategic and business planning, project management, directing, producing and dramaturgy. He has been artistic director of two touring companies (Proteus and West 28th Street) and has commissioned, directed and composed the music for several tours across the south.

Mark is employed part-time at Take Art: the rest of his time he is a freelance theatre-maker, writer, musician and university lecturer. He is currently developing a new rural touring theatre show for summer 2018.

Contact us

Thank you for reading this handbook!

If you have any questions about **BARN**, the best way to contact us is via email: sarah@takeart.org and mark@takeart.org

If you prefer to call, the office number is 01460 249450.

Please also keep an eye on the website for regular updates.

rural touring early years theatre dance music

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