

Party like it's 1947.



03.09.2022

Harlow Playhouse

Tickets available at:
harlowplayhouse.co.uk

29.10.2022

**Harlow Museum
Walled Gardens**

Tickets available at:
harlowmuseum.com

Matipo
ARTS
Presented by Matipo Arts CIC



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

The Show

Watch the full performance here:



Performed at Harlow Playhouse, Theatre 2 on 03.09.22 duration: 64mins no interval

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XS7ymQvTw2o>

It's Harlow New Town's 75th birthday, and everyone's invited to the party! Drawn from Matipo Arts' work within the Harlow community, Harlow75 is an energetic, silly-yet-serious portrait of Harlow; what it was, what it is, and what it could be. Join us for a night of memories, hopes... and quite a lot of dancing about.

Matipo Arts is a Community Interest Theatre Company based at Parndon Mill Hub of Creativity. They have been working in the Harlow community for three years, and previous to that have performed across the London and East Anglian fringe scenes. Their main focus is on new stories, collaboration and having a great time! Harlow75 has been made possible by the support of the Harlow Playhouse, Harlow Museum, Parndon Mill, and the stories and perspectives of Harlow residents.

Harlow



Cast

Greg Baxter
Poppy Evans
Vicky Winnings

Crew

Director Georgia Hardcastle
Designer Sally Hardcastle
Stage Manager Imogen Adshead
Marketing Officer Ellen Pewsey
Design Assistant Laura Bracey-Curry
Poster Design Snootie Studios
Photography and Videography Connor McKee

Partners

Harlow Museum
Harlow Playhouse
Parndon Mill Hub of Creativity

This project is supported by Arts Council England and Sage Homes

With thanks to...

Harlow RockSchool, Gibberd Gallery and Harlow Art Trust, Butterfly Effect Wellbeing, Rainbow Services, Corrina Dunlea, Annalise Taylor, Abbie Freeman, Harry Watson, Phil Hardcastle, Roger Lee, the lovely team at Harlow Playhouse and of course...

All the amazing people who have shared their thoughts, hopes, memories and great ideas with us over the duration of the project!



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Director's Letter;

How did we make the show?

Why?

Our (Myself and Matipo's Co-Director Sally's) Dad grew up in Harlow, and the majority of our family recently moved back to the area. Matipo Arts is registered to Harlow, and is based at Parndon Mill Studios. All this to say, Harlow holds a special place in our hearts. It also has a unique history and identity. We've experienced the town from a number of angles, but have often noticed residents either dismissing Harlow - almost apologising for it, or fiercely defending 'how it used to be'. We wanted to investigate this, challenge the surface level image it seemed to have in wider Essex, and celebrate the complexities of Britain's first New Town. 2022 was the 75th birthday of Harlow New Town, so this seemed the perfect time to do it. We decided to create a community-informed performance celebrating Harlow's past, present and future.



How Did We Get It Funded?

Matipo Arts CIC is a new company. We have been creating work under the 'Matipo' banner for 5 years, but only registered as a Community Interest Company in 2021. As such, *Harlow75 - Party Like It's 1947!* was the most ambitious solo project we had embarked on to date. We applied to local funders, but in the end, gained a grant from Arts Council England, as well as a supporting grant from Sage Housing, who we already had a funding history with. Arts Council grants are notoriously difficult to get, as they are the biggest funders in the UK and competition is high. Our bid would never have been successful without support in kind from Harlow Playhouse (In the form of free rehearsal and performance space), Harlow Museum (Access to research materials, experts, and performance space) and Parndon Mill (Rehearsal Space and our company home). We delivered workshops with community organisations across Harlow to research the town, and invite it's residents into the process of creating the show. These organisations are listed on the previous page, and allowed us access to a wide range of residents, with an even wider range of experiences and memories of Harlow.

Research

Our research started at home, with the knowledge we had already gleaned from years of our Dad reminiscing about Harlow and his family's move there in the late 1960s, as well as his observations once he moved back in 2019. Once we were in the first stages of development of the show, I tried to absorb the broadest range of information possible, starting with the book 'Harlow: The Story of a New Town'. You can find a list of some of our online research sources in the Further Reading section of the document below.



It was important to me that we were celebrating Harlow's present as well as it's origins, so the next stage of research was primary research in the wider Harlow community. We led workshops for adults, young people and with an older people's group. We attended a community day at Harlow Museum, and had a pop up at New Ground Cafe to get quick impressions of the town from anyone we could. I interviewed multiple people one on one, with a couple of sections making it into the final performance verbatim. Another aspect of our research came in the rehearsal room, where our actors shared their experiences, thoughts and feelings about Harlow New Town. As a cast and crew, we visited important sites such as Harlow Museum and the Gibberd Garden.

Rehearsal

Right at the beginning, we agreed this project had to be devised. Although we work there now, Matipo Arts was born in New Zealand and raised in East London, so we felt it was important to include the voices of Harlow at all levels, including the writing process. This was an exciting challenge for me, as my previous projects have been from written scripts which I have developed before stepping into rehearsals.



We had 3 weeks of intensive rehearsals. We spent Week One coming together to research, reminisce, and visit areas of Harlow. We found the conversations we had while walking through the landscape, or while considering a sculpture, to be just as useful as our time in the rehearsal room in these early stages. We also spent a large amount of time playing with visual ideas, blasting loud music, and exploring scenes, sequences and design.

Week Two was all about setting the performance and confirming the script. We interrogated each set piece and metaphor, to make sure it was saying what we wanted it to. We also introduced the recordings of Frederick Gibberd, kindly lent by Harlow Museum, and confirmed the rest of the tracklist. We developed the pace of the show, and how each scene transitioned into the next.

In Week Three, we shared with the world! We held open rehearsals, and fine tuned the show, getting off book and into costumes. This is when our fantastic Stage Manager Imogen came into the process, and we confirmed the logistics and technical elements of the show, all in preparation for our first performance.



Performance 1

The first performance was held at Harlow Playhouse's Theatre 2 on September the 3rd at 7:45pm. We spent the morning in technical rehearsal, making sure we weren't thrown off by the new dimensions of Theatre 2. We were surprised by Dave, a community member multiple groups had spoken fondly of in our research workshops. He was coming to see the show that night and, completely unbeknownst to us, had bought a cake for the party! The show itself was a fantastic culmination of the cast and crew's hard work, and the heart and soul everyone had poured into the project. After the show, people stayed in the bar area writing feedback, talking... and eating Dave's cake! In truth, this is the moment I cherish most about this project because when I looked across the room I felt I could see all of Harlow represented, talking to each other, remembering the past and planning for the future.

Performance 2

The second performance came almost two months later on October 29th at 2pm in the walled gardens at Harlow Museum. Prior to this performance, we had to restage the show for an outdoor environment, and so added a microphone and PA system, as well as remarking the spacing and making some adjustments from the previous show's feedback. As the second performance didn't have any lighting states (apart from daylight!) we also had to think about how we were creating focus and atmosphere with our staging, and seating configuration. In the end, we had an incredible, oversubscribed audience with extra audience members standing at the back. Hosting a second performance at Harlow Museum was important to us because it encouraged audience members back to the starting point for this project, and (we hope) encouraged them to think about their part in Harlow's history.

Hopes

I hope that this has been an interesting insight into the timeline and process of a theatre production, and particularly a devised one. I hope, if you are from Harlow or a similar town, that you feel represented in this show. I hope that if you enjoyed it, you feel you can create something of your own - I'd love to see it!



- Georgia Hardcastle, Director

What Harlow Thought

Feedback from Show 1

'To the director

Your show clearly comes from a person who grew up in our little corner of Essex. Your show reminded me, of a younger more innocent time and that I thank you. I remembered a repressed childhood that I thought I had sealed away, to hide all the bad, I removed all the good. your show reminded me, there WAS good, this town is who I am, I should never forget that. Thank you, good luck in wherever life takes you.

- A Stewards Boy'

'Well done Rock School forever... music played a big part in shaping Harlow.

- Sue Rock School.'

'Loved it! so clever and makes me proud to live here. Learnt a few things too!'

'I liked the use of Gibberd speaking. (...) tupperware parties really did bring people together. (...) must have been so difficult to decide what to omit. Gave excellent feel for what it is like to come to a new town and new community.'

'Excellent! You nailed so many Harlow details, and remind me of ones I had forgot specifically the bar at CMS. that was carnage. Bravo!'

'Lovely, thank you. John Allum did the first marathon years ago. John Allum'

Absolutely brilliant!! I learnt, I laughed and felt very emotional. Thank you so much.

- Jennifer Steadman'

'A wonderful lively trip around, through, back and under Harlow. greatly entertaining'

Feedback from Show 2

'We had seen it at Harlow Playhouse. It was great and second time around here at the museum even better. well done.'

'The show was really well done and entertaining. Also very informative.'

'Really good performance. Celebrating the best and perhaps not so best bits of the town. We think it was a wonderful place to grow up and bring up children. Biggest boys football league in Harlow. Such a shame that the town has taken an unfortunate dip. Did have bustling market, green spaces, Town Park, river walk, cycle tracks, great shops and shopping area. Good schools despite what people may say. Wonderful younger generation but their voices need to be heard. too much about Greed and money now. They need a music venue what happened to the square is disgraceful. There are so many wonderful places and people who do so much for our town. Needs to be celebrated.'

'Very informative in a fun way - thank you'

'Fantastic. love the concept and the in jokes were much appreciated. excellent job. to the next 75!'

'I thought it was brilliant and you all coped so well in an outdoor performance. I loved hearing the Alberni quartet! thank you - congratulations'

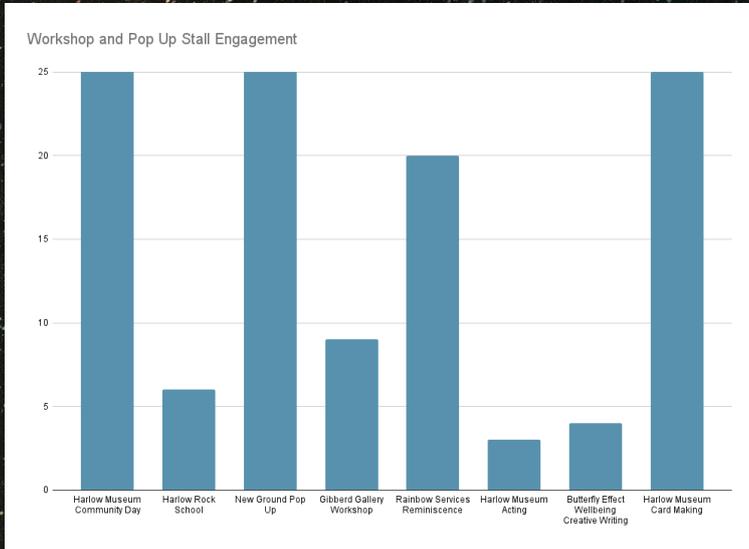
'GREAT'

'Really enjoyed the production. Whilst we haven't live that long in the town where able to pick up on the different points being made then use reference etc. We thought the show had great energy and a touch of pathos - particularly the Square. From a very young age when I was brought to Harlow for shopping at the newly opened Harvey Centre and also to visit relatives was that it must be a very special place as it had pieces of art outside! The Henry Moore family group was sited outside then and I would always run and try and Scramble up on the adults that's before being called back by my parents.'

'Bring back Discover Harlow. The Square. Loved the ending "be proud of what we've got."'

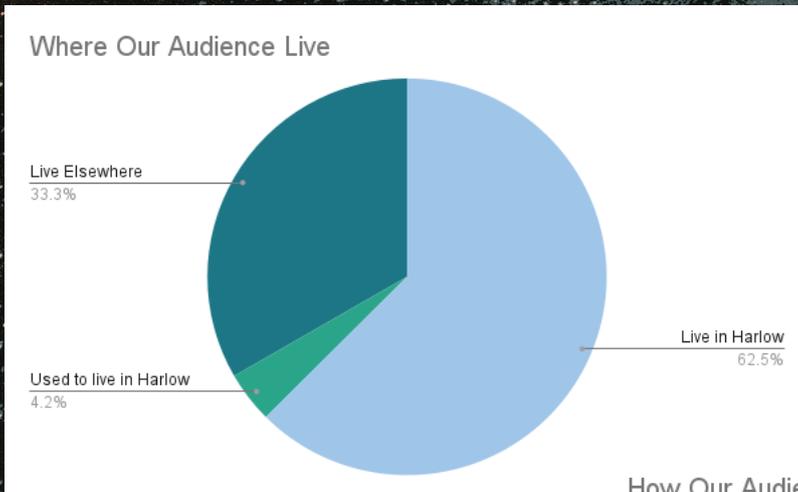
The Facts and Stats

Process Reach



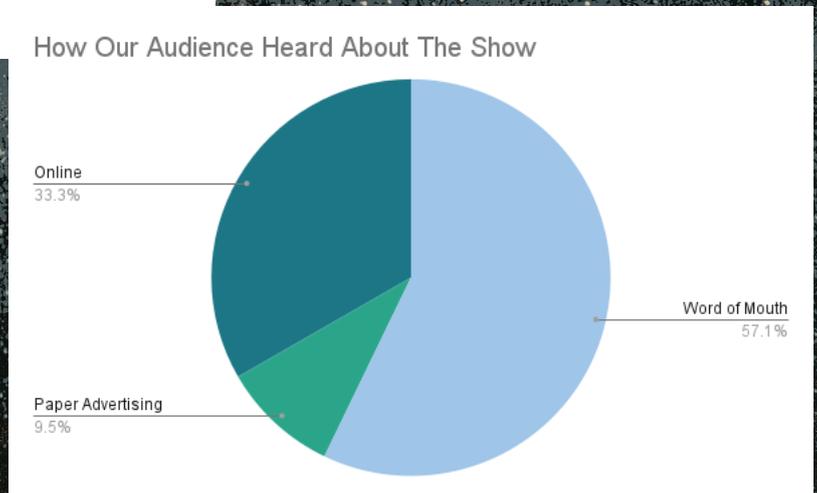
In our research phase, we delivered workshops and attended community events across Harlow. At Harlow Museum's Community Day, we interacted with 400 Harlow residents, and at our pop up stall with New Ground Cafe, an estimate of 50. Individual workshops had a range of engagement, but all gave us insight, created personal connections with Harlow people, and encouraged self expression and engagement with the arts.

Audience



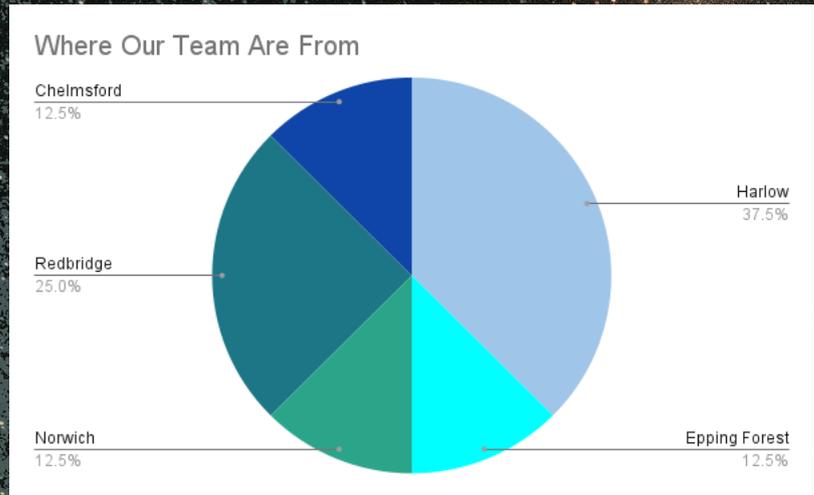
Our audience statistics are taken from those who filled in feedback forms at our second performance. Our overall audience numbers were **90** booked for performance 1 at Harlow Playhouse, and **60** booked for performance 2 at Harlow Museum... i.e. we were **double fully booked!**

Our Social Media had a large increase in engagement over the period of this show. Marketing Officer Ellen said 'Initial poster and rehearsal pictures are the most engaged with' As well as a feature in *Your Harlow* receiving link clicks all the way up to the second show day. It's also important to note that word of mouth still accounts for over half of our audience. Especially for such a community focused project, spreading the word organically was vital.



Employment/Team

It was our mission to create professional opportunities for Harlow creatives, to work well, where they live. It was also important from a creative perspective to include the voices of Harlow. To ensure we achieved this, we guaranteed auditions to anyone with a link to Harlow, and incentivised auditions to Harlow College leavers. In the end, our show reaped the benefits of having a local team - even those of us not currently based in Harlow had links to the Town, and we managed to have an exclusively East of England team!



Starter Questions We've Ended Up With

How has your home town shaped you? How has it shaped the way you see the world?

What do you want people to remember in the future?

What makes a place home?

How can you make a show appeal to people who haven't been to the theatre before?

How do you create art about a place you aren't from in an authentic way?

Why should people care about theatre? And why should theatre care about people?

How can you make in-jokes fun for everyone?

Change is inevitable. What can we take from looking back as well as forwards?



Further Reading



Harlow

Listen To Our Primary Research

Interview with Phil Harcastle (Zoom)

<https://youtu.be/FWwcC2OxYCU>

Interview with Moira Jones (Bishopsfield)

<https://youtu.be/ttNhfDZsFNU>

Interview with Abbie Freeman & Harry Watson (Parndon Mill)

<https://youtu.be/x-ttKxxEpHE>

To Visit in Harlow

Harlow Museum and Walled Gardens

The Gibberd Gallery

The Gibberd House and Gardens

Harlow Playhouse

Parndon Mill Hub of Creativity

Books

Harlow: The Story of a New Town by F Gibberd, B Hyde Harvey, L White

Sculpture in Harlow by G Whiteley

Websites

Harlow Civic Society: <http://www.harlowcivicsociety.org.uk/>

East Anglian Film Archive: <https://eafa.org.uk/>

British History Online - Harlow Town: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol8/pp149-158>

Vinsights - Harlow Census analysis: <https://vinsights.co.uk/Borough/Harlow>

Harlow & Gilston Garden Town: <https://hggt.co.uk/about>

Matipo Arts

What else do we do?

Matipo is an arts company. We make theatre. We make conversations. We make stories and we make friends.

At Matipo Arts, we create and produce events, installations and theatre productions. Our main focus is on new stories and collaboration. We believe in the innate value of creativity and we want to use it to unlock the power of people!

If you are interested in booking a workshop, signing up to our mailing list, or generally want to keep up to date with our shows and projects, then get in touch via the details below.

How can you contact us?

Email: info@matipoarts.com

Social Media: [@MatipoArts](https://www.instagram.com/MatipoArts)

In person: Check our website matipoarts.com for how we could work with you in person, or where you might find us next!

From all of us here at...



Thank you for reading, watching and thinking your way through this resource pack. We look forward to seeing and hearing what you take from it back into Harlow and the wider world.

**Here's To Another
75 Years!**