

Hope Mill Theatre, The Edge, 53two & The Kings Arms Theatre
come together to create
the Greater Manchester Small Venues Network (GMSVN)



Last year, during the first lockdown, leading Greater Manchester arts venues, Hope Mill Theatre, The Edge, 53two and The Kings Arms Theatre joined forces to launch Greater Manchester Small Venues Network (GMSVN).

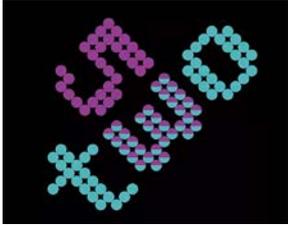
The four venues, which have been operating collectively across the Greater Manchester area for over 30 years, felt there was a need now for a network like this and have taken inspiration from other venue networks across the UK.

The Greater Manchester Small Venues Network was established to speak collectively for independent venues with less than 200 seats. These smaller venues are a vital part of the local arts economy, development and existence of the cultural scene across Greater Manchester. In joining forces, the GMSVN now has a combined voice both locally and nationally.

GMSVN aims to combine expertise and resources and provide a support network for each other when it comes to profile development and outreach. Made up of venues that offer theatre, music, comedy, artist development and participation, the group believe that together, they can bring a greater recognition to their increasingly important position in the cultural landscape. With a focus on inclusivity, diversity, accessibility and opportunity, there has never been a more important time for unity and this network will play it's part in the healing and recovery of our wonderful region and its independent arts scene.

Joseph Houston, Artistic Director of Hope Mill Theatre, Ancoats, said: "We are so proud to have our roots in the Greater Manchester region and are constantly inspired by the work being created by northern artists and theatre makers. The past year and the impact of Covid on our industry, proved the need for strong links and collaboration with other similar venues in order for the longevity and sustainability of the Greater Manchester small venues landscape. Smaller venues across the country are the life blood of local communities, they are a springboard for many artists to pursue a career in the arts and they also bridge the gap between smallscale work and the subsidised and commercial sector."

Janine Waters of The Edge, Chorlton, said: "It's the perfect time to be coming together with these other great venues. We are all passionate about giving our audiences, artists and participants the best experiences and we share a determination to support the healing of our wonderful region after the pandemic. The power of a network strengthens the cultural sector, strengthens the member venues and helps us to secure the position of high quality small scale theatre in Greater Manchester"



53two

53two provide opportunities in the performing arts where other support may not be available. We engage with individuals and groups in guidance as to development and opportunities and house a performance arts educational programme providing professional support, at affordable prices. Our work centres around promoting equality, diversity and social inclusion and providing support in provision of space and our 150-seat theatre, mentoring, grants or other, when authorised by the trustees. We produce new, quality writing whilst developing and nurturing new creatives. It is the intention of the team at 53two to ensure that diversity, equality, accessible and quality theatre is a staple across Greater Manchester.



The Edge

In 2021 The Edge celebrates its 10th year as Manchester's Theatre for Participation. This beautiful venue has entertained, captivated and enthralled audiences with some of the best smallscale touring theatre in the country, alongside in-house productions including: 'Spinach', 'Dreaming Under a Different Moon' and 'That's the Trouble with the Poor'. Over the years they've worked with hundreds of fantastic actors, singers and musicians; many are professional, some have learning disabilities, some have experience of homelessness, some are from the local community and all are brilliant! "As theatre makers we delight in creating shows which reflect the world that we live in, even if we've set them on the moon. They're honest, relevant and always full of hope". As a Manchester Cultural Partner they play a vital role in the cultural offer of the city. As leaders in participation they provide a range of exciting opportunities for people to be creative. Before the pandemic, over 750 people a week took part in a creative activity at The Edge, from babies to elders and everyone in-between. The Edge was founded by Janine, Dom and Simon Waters who discovered the building by chance when rehearsing Love Shift, for The Royal Exchange in 2010. This beautiful two-story Victorian building was on the verge of being mothballed when, with no money but oodles of enthusiasm and experience (Janine used to work at The Royal Exchange and before that Shakespeare's Globe) they took the project on and haven't looked back since! Janine has been shortlisted for two awards - International Woman of the Year: Contribution to Culture, and Inspirational Woman of the Year: Culture & Media. The Edge has won Best Community Space at the Spirit of Manchester Awards, Social Impact Using the Arts Award from Excelerate Labs, received a special commendation at the Manchester Culture Awards for their work with The Booth Centre, and were finalists in the Be Proud Awards and This Is Manchester Awards. In 2018 the Edge's Cafe Bar, The Dressing Room, won an Observer Food Monthly Award for the Dressing Room Café Bar. Thanks to The National Lottery, Veolia and Viridor landfill Trusts, The Edge have used the lockdown to carry out some important building works and to make The Edge an even more special venue. They are now looking forward to fully reopening on the 1 September, with a shiny new space and an exciting and eclectic programme.



Hope Mill Theatre

The award-winning Hope Mill Theatre was the dream of couple Joseph Houston and William Whelton, who, after a career in Musical Theatre and living in London, became inspired by the highly regarded off-West End theatres and the high-quality work they were producing. With the growing theatre industry blossoming in Manchester and no medium-sized venues producing musicals, they set up and established the independent venue in November 2015. The venue has firmly placed itself on the northern map for its ambitious in-house musical productions, which include: 'Rags'; 'Parade'; 'Hair - the Musical' (London, UK Tour); the UK premiere of 'Yank!' (Charing Cross Theatre, London); the European premiere of 'Little Women', 'Spring Awakening', 'Pippin' (Southwark Playhouse, London); 'Aspects of Love' (Southwark Playhouse); 'The Return of the Soldier', 'Putting It Together', 'Rags' (The Park Theatre) and most recently 'Mame' (starring Tracie Bennett) and the World Premiere of the new musical 'The Astonishing Times of Timothy Cratchit'. Most recently they produced a revival of 'RENT', which received rave reviews in November 2020. Upcoming productions include; 'Hushabye Mountain', 'RENT' and 'The Wiz'. In October 2016, Joseph and William were awarded the Hospital Club Award for contribution to theatre and performance. In 2017, they picked up a Special Achievement Award at the Manchester Theatre Awards. The venue was nominated for the Peter Brook Empty Space Award, won a Northern Soul Award for small theatre of the year and won the prestigious The Stage Fringe Theatre of the Year Award in 2018. The venue was also awarded the WhatsOnStage Awards' - WhatsOffStageAward for Best Front of House Team and Favourite Theatre in 2018. They were also recently nominated for a Manchester City Council Culture Award for Outstanding Contribution. Hope Mill Theatre hosts many emerging and established Manchester theatre companies, touring productions and offers a varied programme for its audiences. Joseph and William joined forces with Aria Entertainment to spearhead the venue as a regional home for new musicals and musical revivals, and their successful collaboration saw them named on The Stage 100 list in 2018/19 and 2019/20. Both Houston and Whelton were also on The Stage list 2021 for those in the arts industry who went above and beyond during the pandemic. William Whelton is a recipient of the Stage One young producers bursary for emerging producers. The venue has recently transitioned into a charity – A Factory of Creativity CIO – allowing the venue to continue its extraordinary work, including supporting emerging artists and new work, working with young people and offering mentorship in the arts, as well as securing their future in the UK Theatre landscape. To find out more information on how you can support Hope Mill Theatre in this exciting new venture and more details on our community outreach programmes please visit: hopemilltheatre.co.uk. Hope Mill Theatre's registered charity number is: 1183251

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The King's Arms

In October 1850, The Kings Arms was advertised to let by the Adelphi Brewery. The new tenant was Thomas Holden and upon his departure in September 1858, the advertisement stated that the pub had been selling seven barrels of beer a week for seven and a half years. For over a century, the three main buildings on Bloom Street were the Corporation gas offices, Salford House and The Kings Arms. The gas offices closed long ago and the last residents of the hostel left in the 1990's but The Kings Arms is still in business. A number of clubs have found a base at the Kings Arms. Between 1946 and 1971 it was the regular meeting place of the North of England Irish Terrier Club which was founded in 1906. Salford Friendly Anglers Society, the world's oldest angling club, has traditionally used the pub as its meeting place. (A sign "Ye Anglers Club House" can still be made out on the brickwork on the gable end of pub.) In 2007, The Knitting Club was founded and meets every Monday evening in the snug. The Kings Arms is at the heart of the community with connections that strive to bring about a sense of empowerment and positive spirit for the people of Salford and Manchester. In 2006, Jo Byrne and Jon Cooper took over the pub and discovered the potential of the upstairs space by creating a floor of artist's studio space and opening up the large upstairs room for gigs and theatre performances. The Kings Arms has been used as a location for filming for TV productions such as 'Cracker' and most recently 'Fresh Meat'. In 2011, the pub lease was taken over by Paul Heaton and Zena Barrie and since then more emphasis has been placed on the pub's artistic endeavors. Regularly accommodating art exhibitions, fringe festivals, gigs, poetry night and all sorts of weird and wonderful types of entertainment. In December 2015, Lisa Connor took over the premises with every intention to continue with the pub's artistic vision and build on how the pub can help the local community.