

The background features a teal and yellow color palette. Silhouettes of children are visible, including a large central figure and smaller figures at the bottom. Numerous bubbles of various sizes are scattered throughout the scene, creating a whimsical, underwater-like atmosphere.

# magic Acorns

**CIC Report 2023 -2024**

Thanks to our funders and partners



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

**YOUTH  
MUSIC**

**CATCH THE TIDE**  
GREAT YARMOUTH



**RANWORTH TRUST**

original  
projects



*London*



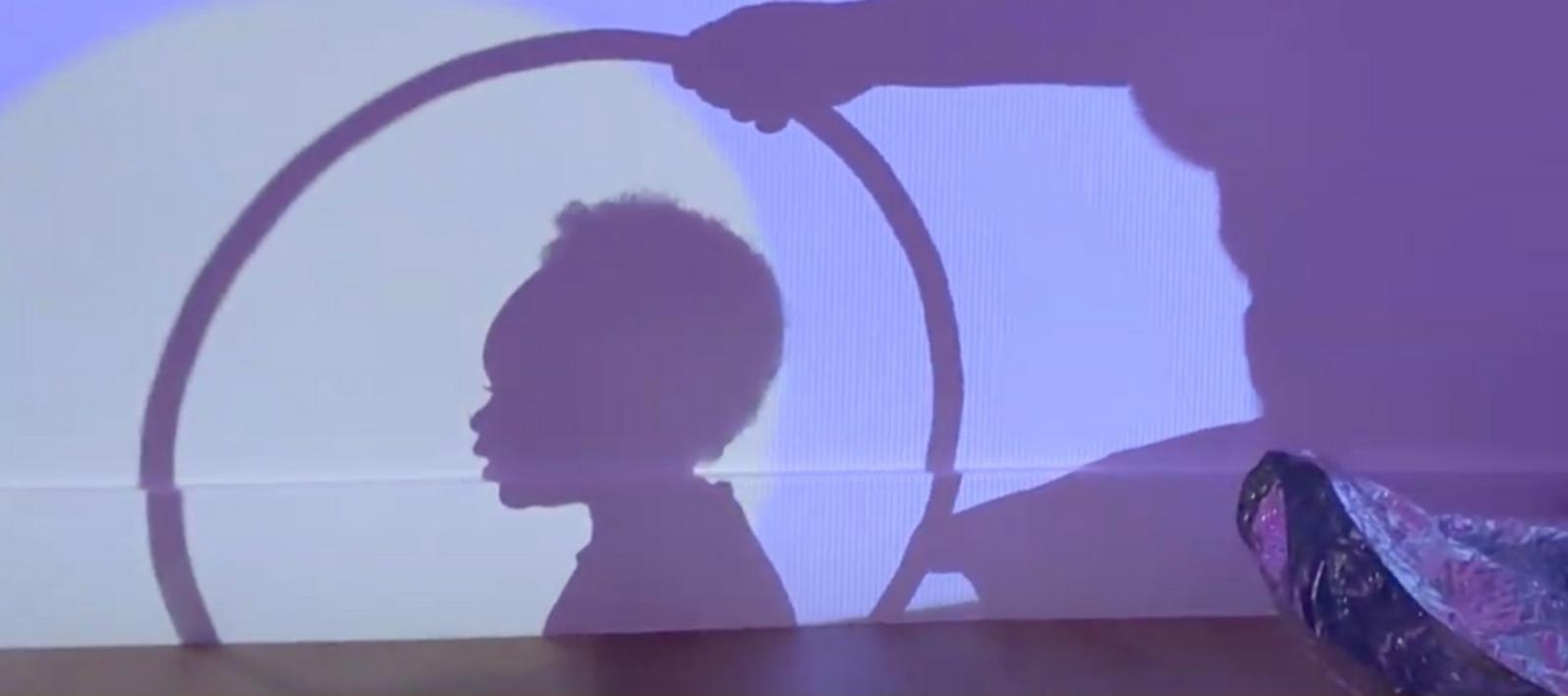
**Norwich  
Theatre**



**BRITTEN PEARS  
ARTS**



SEVEN CIRCLES



# Introduction

2023-2024 has been a period of **exciting developments** for Magic Acorns. In May 2023 we moved into our new space on Stonecutters Way in Great Yarmouth and opened the UK's first (as far as we know!) **dedicated early years arts venue**.

We have expanded our offers for families, hosting **108 sessions** or events for families, welcoming **126 families** with 0-3 year olds into our space and other venues. We have supported **24 multi-disciplinary artists** - offering traineeships, bursaries and nurtured artist opportunities to encourage artistic development and to grow a diverse workforce of early years specialist artists.

We also worked with some inspiring **inter/national practitioners and partners** through professional development events and partnerships, residencies, and research, and we have developed our **Advisory Board**.

There is lots to **celebrate** this year, and it has been a time of huge growth and change for us. We are so glad to be back home in **Great Yarmouth** and we are excited about our plans - and the possibilities for the future.



# Magic Play

Our weekly family sessions, funded through our Arts Council England project, offer time to **explore and play together** with materials and objects in a **sensory space**. Hosted by Magic Acorns' specialist early years artists, it provides **unhurried time**, with no pressure to do or make anything. The space is carefully set up to invite **curiosity and intrigue** - both for the children and the adults that join us. Everything in the space can be moved, transformed and played with. The artists sensitively notice and respond to the different interests the babies and young children bring to each session.

Magic Play sessions have reached **96 families** so far since June 2023, With **111 babies and young children**, and **120 parent/carers** coming to play. This is what some of the parent/carers said:

**" I love how my child interacted with other children and how the staff interact with the children as well. My child has learnt new things going to these sessions."**

**"We love it! Everything is so well thought out and well presented. Nothing like this around and it's definitely needed."**

A sensory room with a white fabric canopy, string lights, and a large circular mat on the floor. The room is decorated with white fabric, string lights, and a large circular mat on the floor. The mat is surrounded by a green artificial grass mat with several wooden blocks. The room is decorated with white fabric, string lights, and a large circular mat on the floor. The mat is surrounded by a green artificial grass mat with several wooden blocks. The room is decorated with white fabric, string lights, and a large circular mat on the floor. The mat is surrounded by a green artificial grass mat with several wooden blocks.

**“I feel that the sessions  
'nourish' my child's mind with  
lots of positivity and sensory  
experiences.”**

Parent Participant

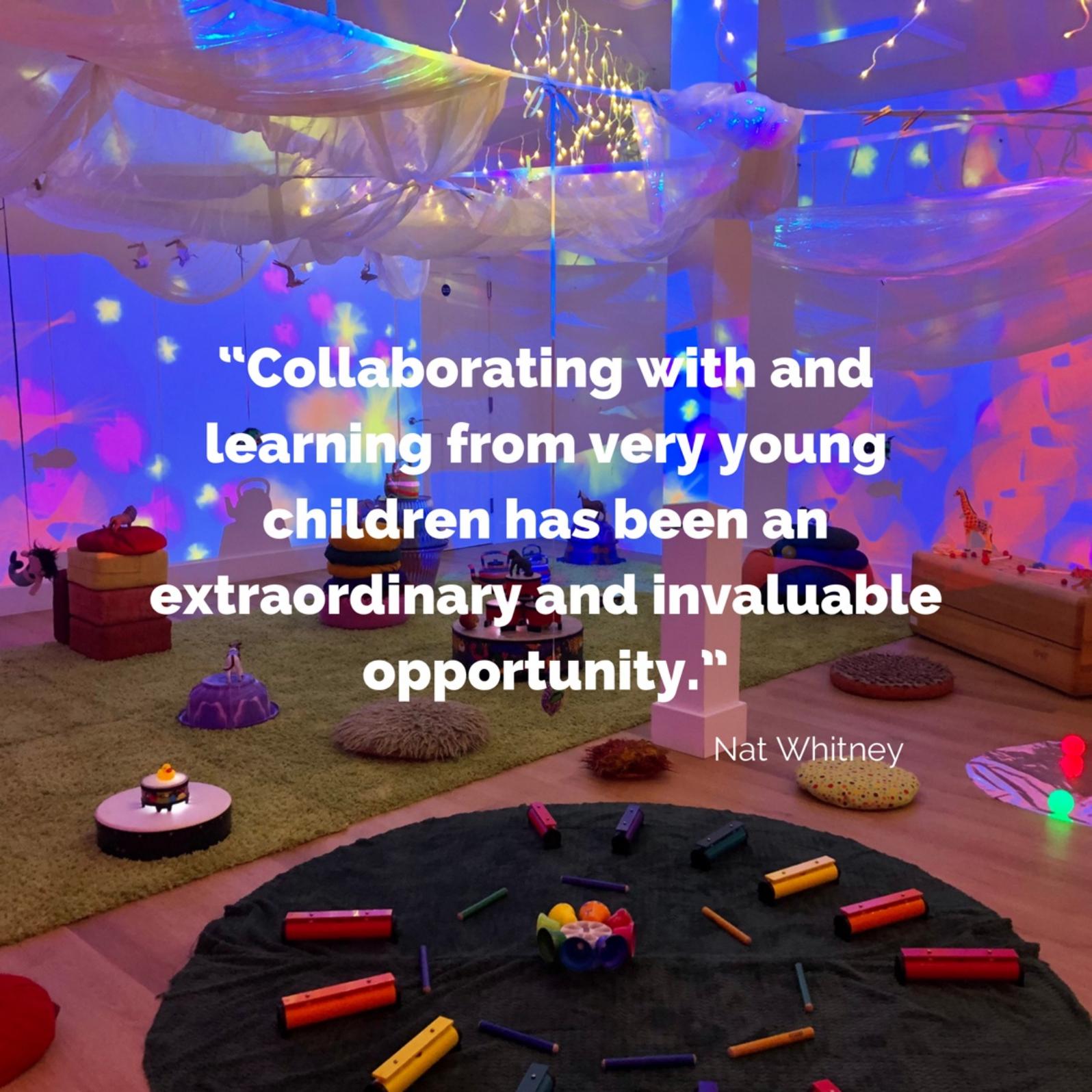


# Music Garden

Music Garden is a **musical play space** for families, and where our **Youth Music**-funded trainees learn from and experience working with 0-3 year olds. This year we worked with **three trainees**. In Great Yarmouth, we worked with school-leaver Tallulah Smith and participatory audio/visual artist Nat Whitney. In Norwich, we set up a group at Earham Early Years and worked with musician Aphra McSherry Birley. Each trainee had the opportunity to participate in professional development days and to **learn from babies and young children** by supporting **weekly early years music** sessions in the two locations. Working alongside experienced early years artists, Abby Page and Natalie Willis, they explored creating musical play spaces, developed listening, attunement and sensitivity, as well skills in leading songs and musical games.

Over 3 terms the trainees have supported **54 sessions**, reaching **68 families**. Writing about their learning over the past year Aphra reflected

**“As I come to the end of my traineeship I am now trying my hand at leading songs and portions of the sessions. I feel far more confident and have gained an understanding of music and play that is individual to Magic Acorns' approach to early years arts. It has been a very special time, that I will go on to treasure and continuously draw on.”**

A vibrant, colorful playroom with a white net suspended from the ceiling, string lights, and various toys on a green rug. The room is filled with bright colors and playful elements, including a giraffe figurine, a small table with a horse, and a large black rug with colorful toys in the foreground.

**“Collaborating with and  
learning from very young  
children has been an  
extraordinary and invaluable  
opportunity.”**

Nat Whitney



# The Nest

Our Nest Residency took place over ten days in September and October 2023. Funded through our **Arts Council England** project, it brought together **13 diverse artists** some of whom were early career or **'nurtured' artists** including **two bursary artists**, alongside **five 'lead' artists**. The groups' arts practices ranged from dance, visual art, videography, composition, electro-acoustic, audio-visual, instrumental and vocal practice.

The initial stages of The Nest residency brought together the lead and nurtured artists to tune into one another, to play and to develop performance pieces which families were invited to. The family events took place in our space, and on the beach - a new location for us. Three events were developed: The Beach, Tiny Promenade, and The Sensory Space.

Our residency model is generative, a liminal space where artists, young children and their caregivers can step outside of normal day-to-day practice/living into a possibility world of "so much joy, laughter and wonderful silliness!"

During The Nest there were **13 performances** and **57 families attended**.

A baby with light hair and a yellow scarf is shown in profile, looking towards the left. The background is a soft-focus landscape of green fields under a blue sky. In the foreground, there are large, flowing pieces of pink and blue fabric. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**“It made me feel quite emotional to be honest. Seeing how happy my daughter was, exploring nature and the arts in all its glory!”**

Parent Participant



# Artist Development

Supporting artists is a fundamental part of our charitable goals, which we do by offering paid artistic opportunities, mentoring, and creative professional development. Bringing artists together with very young children and families to play, experience and ultimately shape what early years arts can be.

Over this period we have worked with a **diverse range of artists**, exploring different art forms, all bringing a variety of experiences and perspectives. We have grown our **artist community**, working directly with **24 artists**, with a focus on **attracting local artists** living or working in Great Yarmouth.

For a significant number of the artists we have supported, this was the first time they worked with this age group. Pairing experienced early years artists with **nurtured artists** to co-create and share thinking enables us to find new and pioneering ways of working with young children.

A group of people are in a studio setting, engaged in a playful activity. A woman in a green tunic and pants stands in the center, holding a paper airplane. To her right, a person in a green and black striped shirt is bent over, also holding a paper airplane. In the background, another person in a light blue shirt is holding a paper airplane. On the left, a person in a pink shirt is leaning forward. In the foreground, a person in a purple shirt is sitting on the floor, looking towards the group. The floor is wooden, and there are some white papers scattered on it. The overall atmosphere is one of playfulness and connection.

**“Immersive, playful,  
supportive,  
overwhelming, eye  
opening, connected,  
safe, joyous, emotional.”**

Artist Participant



# Professional development

Working with inter/national artists and practitioners, this year we have offered our own **creative professional development** (CPD) programme and hosted **Early Years Incubate** weekend residencies. Keeping our practice alive and our inquiries dynamic is essential as we grow as a community of artists and forge new ways of developing early years creative arts.

Supported by partners **Norwich Theatre** and **Britten Pears Arts**, this year we invited **Companhia de Música Teatro** and **Takeshi Matsumoto** to facilitate Early Years Incubate with artists from all over the UK attending.

**"This was such a gentle, profound and powerful experience."** Participant

During this year and beyond, we formed partnerships with **Hertfordshire Music Hub, Suffolk Artlink, Inspiring Music, Families Together Suffolk, Springs Dance Company, Rest & Digest** to create bespoke CPD and mentoring programmes for artists, musicians and educators who are developing their practice working with 0-5 year olds.

A photograph showing a person in an orange shirt being held or supported by others. The person's hands are visible, and they appear to be in a state of distress or being comforted. The background is blurred, showing other people in white shirts.

**“I really felt that I had arrived  
in a place that I was  
supposed to be, at the right  
moment in time, with the  
right people. I felt held,  
encouraged, my work and  
thoughts felt validated.”**

Participant

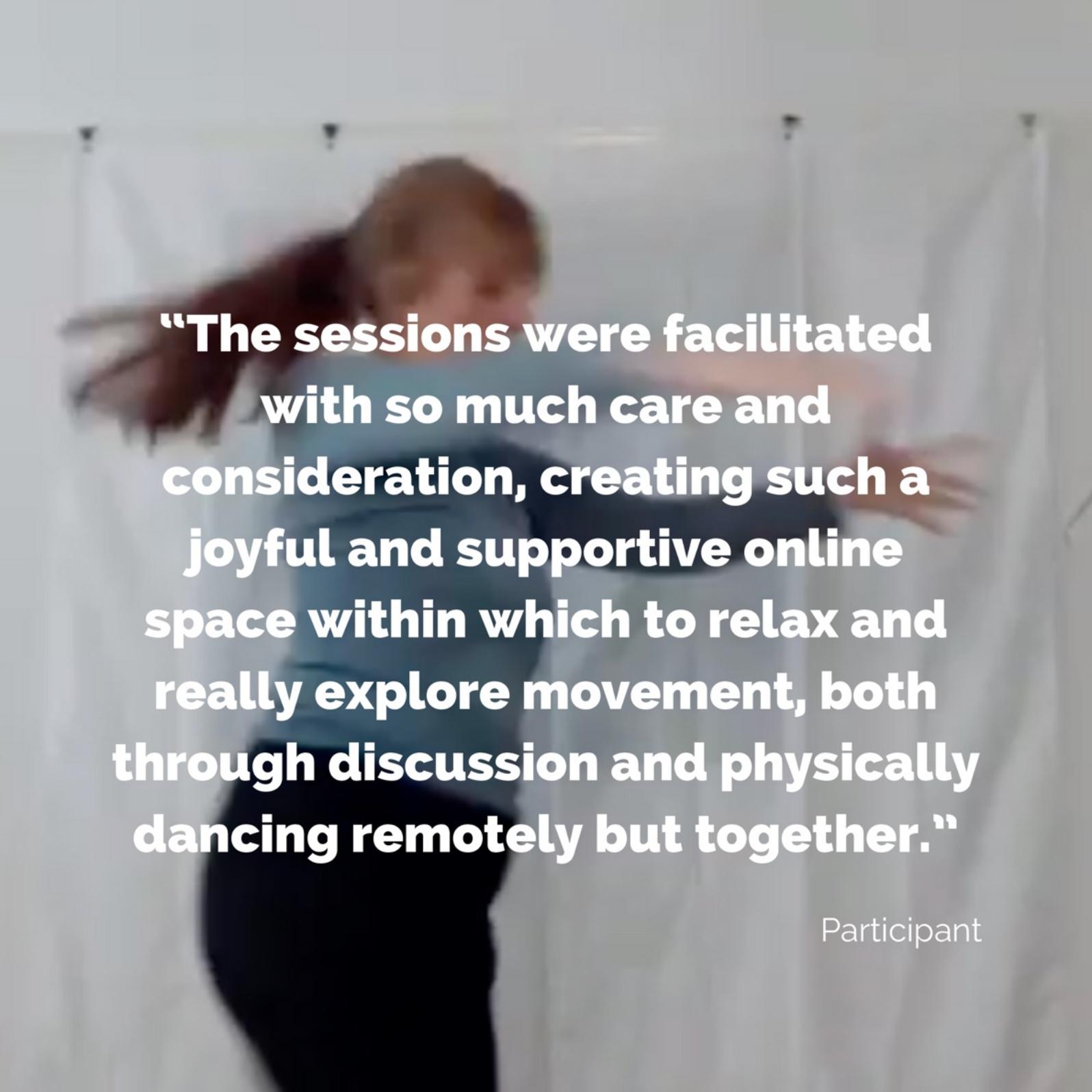


# Magic Online

Our online networking, workshops and seminars were a key area of development during this period. We hosted online networking sessions, courses, individual workshops and webinars, reaching participants locally, regionally, nationally and internationally,

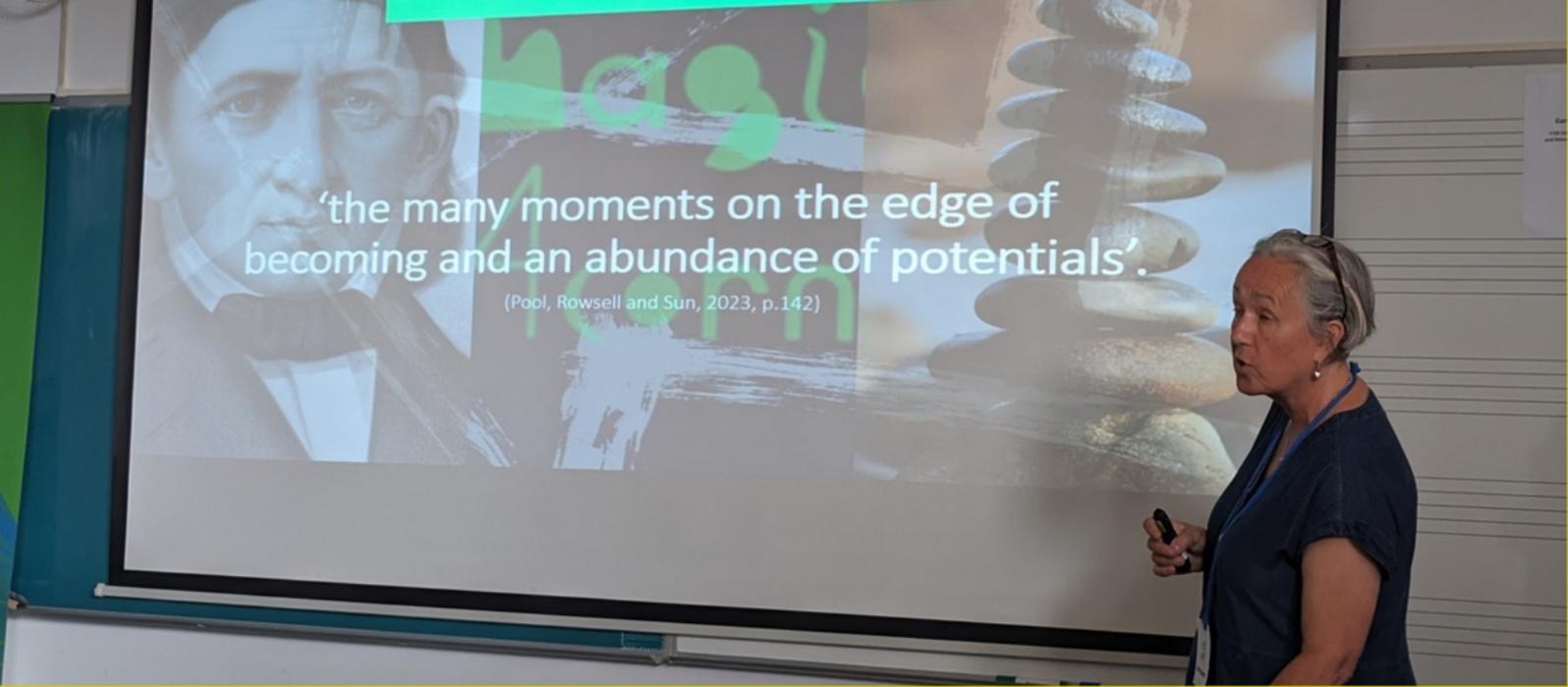
**82 participants** attended our online workshops, **120 attended the webinars**, and we reached **79 individuals through our online networking sessions**.

We were delighted to host Ellen Dissanayake, Bronwyn Davies and Charlotte Arculus, who all generously shared **academic research** to a variety of interested participants. We hosted courses around **developing and creating** theatre for early years with Joy Haynes; exploring ways to introduce movement in our practice with Abby Page; and a Spring Buffet of one-off workshops led by Sophie Fox exploring some of the fundamental aspects of Magic Acorns' practice - sharing songs, creating environments, loose parts play and developing connection and relationships through play.



**“The sessions were facilitated with so much care and consideration, creating such a joyful and supportive online space within which to relax and really explore movement, both through discussion and physically dancing remotely but together.”**

Participant

A woman with short grey hair, wearing a dark blue top and a lanyard, stands to the right of a large projection screen. The screen displays a quote in white text over a background image of a stack of smooth, light-colored stones. On the left side of the screen, there is a portrait of a man in a suit and bow tie. The quote reads: 'the many moments on the edge of becoming and an abundance of potentials'. Below the quote, in smaller text, is the citation: (Pool, Rowsell and Sun, 2023, p.142).

'the many moments on the edge of becoming and an abundance of potentials'.

(Pool, Rowsell and Sun, 2023, p.142)

## Research

Our academic research both reflects and informs all our artistic work. The two aspects are intertwined and symbiotic. We see **knowledge created in the moments of creative interactions** amongst children, artists, caregivers, materials, sound and space. Bringing this knowledge into focus is our research aim. Our research outputs this year include:

- In April 2023, Jess Pitt presented a paper at the RiME (Research in Music Education) conference: **A posthuman paradigm for early childhood music: Musical play as mycelial embodied polyphony.**
- Jess Pitt, Charlotte Arculus, Sophie Fox and Inside-Out Project Associate Researcher Barbara Cavanagh, presented a symposium: **Listening for invitations to play** at European Network MERYC (Music Educators and Researchers of Young Children) conference at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 3-7 July 2023.
- Jess and Sophie wrote '**Music for parent and child interaction**' - a chapter in **Music and Parental Mental Wellbeing** (Oxford University Press) edited by Rosie Perkins.

Invitation  
to listen  
radically -  
listening as  
change-making

Symposium Participant



# Stonecutters Way

On 1 July 2023 we held an opening celebration at our new dedicated early years arts space on Stonecutters Way. Throughout the day we welcomed partners, colleagues, artists, friends, families and supporters, who all came to celebrate with us.

We want to say a special thank you to **Gillian Harwood** from Lewes Workspace for her vision and generosity in enabling us to develop a home for Magic Acorns in Great Yarmouth; the amazing team of builders headed up by **Adam Czulak** for their dedication to the renovation; and to **Kaavous Clayton** and **Julia Devonshire** from originalprojects for their encouragement and commitment to creating interesting and creative spaces for artists in Great Yarmouth.

We are delighted to be in a space that we can welcome families and artists to, and feel excited by the possibilities it offers. Watch this space!



# Thank you to...

## **Our artists and contributors**

Abby Page, Aphra McSherry Birley, Bronwyn Davies, Charlie Ditcham, Charlotte Arculus, Charly Jolly, Chris Dowding, Claire Atherton, Ellen Dissanyake, Emily Thomas, Gaelin Little, Genevieve Rudd, Helena Rodrigues, Jess Pitt, Jorge Garça, Joy Haynes, Judy Goodman, Lewis Wickwar, Maddie Broad, Nat Whitney, Natalie Willis, Oliver Payne, Rachel Wright, Sara Moreira, Sophie Fox, Sue Parr, Takeshi Matsumoto, Tallulah Smith

## **Our funders and partners**

Arts Council England, Britten Pears Arts, Catch the Tide, Companhia Musica Teatral, Earlham Early Years, Families Together Suffolk, Froebel Trust, Geoffrey Waltling, Hertfordshire Music Service, Inspiring Music, Norfolk Community Foundation, Norfolk County Council, North Denes Nursery School, Norwich Theatre, Original Projects, Ranworth Trust, Royal College of Music, Seven Circles, Suffolk Artlink, Youth Music

## **Our Advisory Board**

Chrissie Meikle, Jade-Marie Anderson, Krista Ribbons, Mary Stakelum, Meglena Petkova, Melanie George, Nick O'Connor, Nicky Mekheimar, Oscar Lotis, Paula Keith, Rebecca Denniff

## **Our Directors**

Charlotte Arculus, Jess Pitt, Joy Haynes, Lyndall Rosewarne, Sophie Fox

**and a special thanks to all the families, babies and young children!**



# In memory of Lyndall

In July 2024 our dear friend and colleague Lyndall Rosewarne died aged 64 of cancer. Lyndall was a founding member of Magic Acorns and a key person in our development and our successes. Lyndall worked with wit, grace and tenacity behind the scenes, developing project ideas, seeking funding, driving our vision forward and making Magic Acorns into a reality.

Lyndall was a strategic and creative thinker, she had a rich and varied career and was a significant figure in music education in the east of England and beyond, with passions for inclusivity, grass-roots approaches and building communities through the arts.

We miss Lyndall deeply and will be continuing to ask ourselves "what would Lyndall do?" as we care for and grow Magic Acorns.



# EMINGTON: THE MASTER

Buffalo Bill Historical Center      Museum of Fine Arts, St. Louis

The exhibition is made possible by a grant from Merrill Lynch & Co.  
The exhibition was organized by The Saint Louis Art Museum, in conjunction with the

MICHAEL  
WOOD  
BOOKS  
AC  
A HISTORY OF  
ANGLO-SAXON  
MICHAE



**[www.magicacorns.co.uk](http://www.magicacorns.co.uk)**  
**Company Number 12117221 - Registered address:**  
**Magic Acorns CIC, 2 Stonecutters Way, Great Yarmouth, NR30 1HF**

Photo credits: Lewis Wickwar, Nat Whitney, Sophie Fox