



Ripple

EARLY YEARS ARTS FESTIVAL 2025

Magic Acorns

Professional Symposium 13th September 2025

An interdisciplinary gathering for extravagant ideas about art and people under three.



Supported using public funding by
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CATCH THE TIDE
GREAT YARMOUTH

**YOUTH
MUSIC**





Welcome

Welcome to Great Yarmouth and the Magic Acorns Ripple Professional Symposium. We are delighted that you're with us and excited for what will unfold today and across the week of the festival.

We hope that you find the day stimulating, with space to share your knowledge and wisdom, and to discuss and connect with others.

Thank you to the presenters for preparing your talks so carefully and helping us think together with your thoughts and work.

Thanks also to the technical team supporting us today; to St George's Theatre for hosting us, and The Bakehouse – our neighbours - for the delicious food and for agreeing to host and help curate our exhibition - do visit this if you can and then pop in to explore and play in the Magic Acorns space with the Playtech materials.

Some Magic Acorns freelance artists are here to support the event as stewards; please don't hesitate to speak to them should you have any queries, concerns or needs during the day. We are here to help.

The presentations will be recorded and available for you to view again after the event, it won't be live streamed. The recordings will also be available to purchase for those not able to attend today.

We appreciate that you have made time to be here with us. That is a gift that we hope we can honour with today's proceedings.

Magic Acorns Directors

Dedication

We dedicate this Symposium and the Ripple Early Years Festival to Lyndall Rosewarne whose vision it was to hold this event in Great Yarmouth. Lyndall was a wise, caring, deep thinker whom we were fortunate to work alongside as co-directors. She died in July 2024, and we miss her greatly. You can read more about her life [here](#).





History of Magic Acorns

The organisational development that brought Magic Acorns CiC into being was enabled by Great Yarmouth Community Trust (GYCT); Magic Adventure; Norwich Puppet Theatre; and The Festival Bridge.

The founding Directors: Joy Haynes; Sophie Fox; Charlotte Arculus; Jess Pitt and Lyndall Rosewarne came together with diverse backgrounds, skills and knowledge from within (or with support from) these organisations to form a collective. The practice grew from the ground-breaking, grass-roots music-arts practice that began at The Priory Sure Start Children's Centre with connections to the Great Yarmouth communities via GYCT.

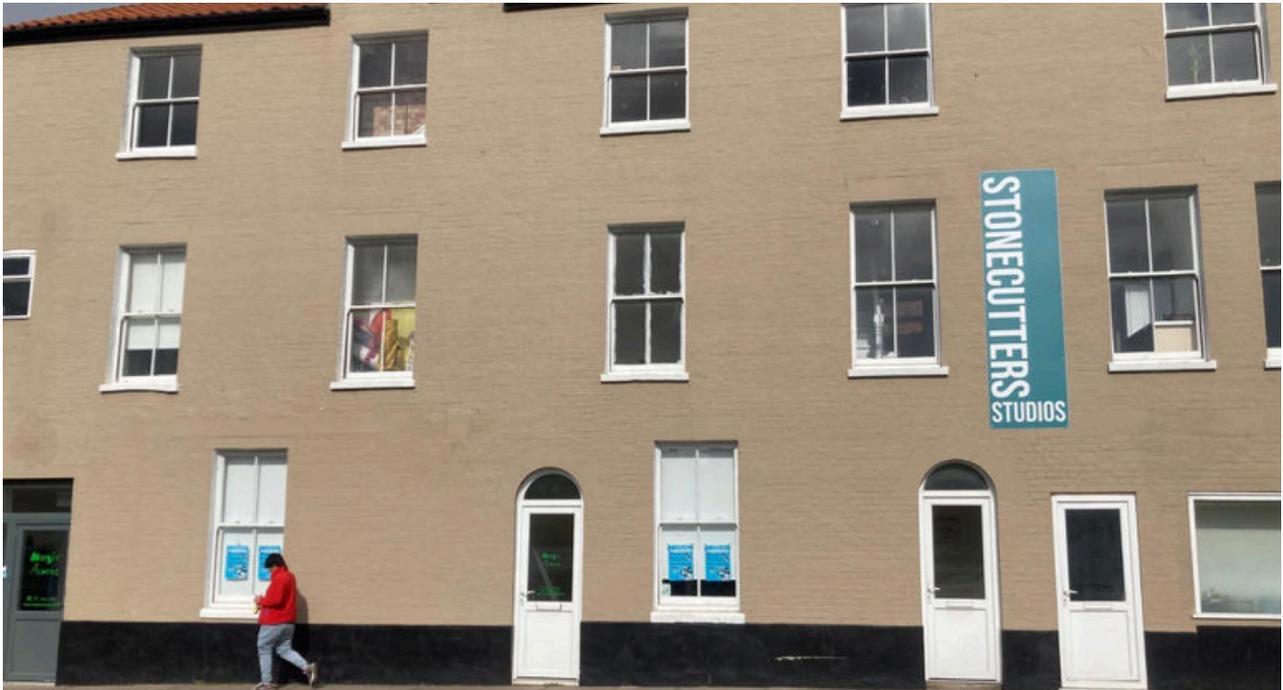
Magic Acorns CiC takes its name from 'Magic' of Magic Adventure and Acorns from AYCORN (Arts and Young Children Regional Network - formed by Norwich Puppet Theatre) and became a CiC in July 2019.

The Priory Children's Centre closed its doors in 2019 and our friends at Original Projects came to the rescue. We moved temporarily into the repurposed department store - PRIMEYARC - in Market Gates (GY) enabling us to continue our work with families and artists from that space.

The hunt for our own place began. It was a journey full of serendipity, hard work and great partnerships that led us to be part of Catch the Tide's Stonecutters Way development and we moved into our own venue in May 2023.

Magic
Acorns

Ripple
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Since then, we have been able to invite people under four and their caregivers into the space. Artists experiment and create with babies and children to bring new work into the world.

We support artists who are new to creating with young children and we lend our space to a number of arts-culture, health, education and social care organisations. From this base, our work travels nationally and internationally through sharing research and arts practice.

Although we feel rooted in our community, we never forget that without funding we could not exist. We are so grateful to our non-executive Directors; our faithful funders; and supporters of our work.

We have exciting plans in place for the next five years; seeking to deepen and strengthen our links with partners in Great Yarmouth and beyond.

[Join our mailing list](#) to keep in touch.



Information

We are aiming for a warm and respectful atmosphere for everyone attending the symposium. Please bear this in mind during the questions and discussion sections of the day.

Internet Access

LOCATION	WI-FI NETWORK NAME	PASSWORD
St George's Cafe	STG-Cafe	STG-Cafe
St George's Theatre	STG-Admin	999888777!0

Accessibility and Inclusion

There is a quiet space available, please follow the signs or ask a steward to direct you.

Here is a link to a free AI app which we hope can support those who require live captioning. Other apps are available depending on your phone's operating system. We cannot guarantee the quality of this app. [Live captioning](#).

We suggest downloading any apps and testing them in advance.

Please feel free to bring what you need to feel comfortable during the event.

Photography

We will be taking video and photos during the event, if you do not want to be photographed please let one of the stewards know.

If you would like to take photos on your phone during the event please ask permission of any other delegates that might be in the frame. If you share images on social media please feel free to tag Magic Acorns

Nut Allergy

Please note we have been advised of a severe nut allergy - do not bring nuts to the Symposium

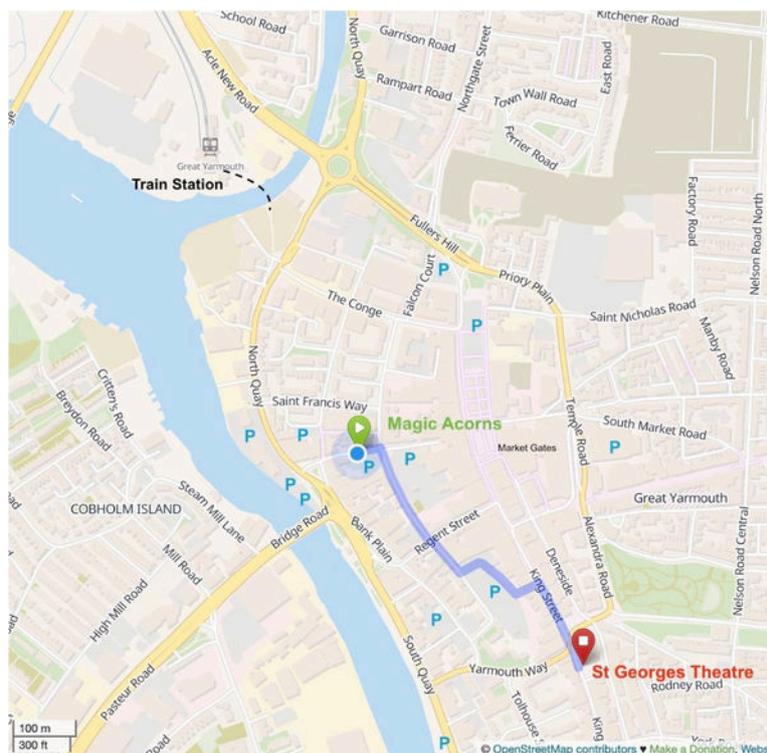
9-10	Registration	
9.55-10	Opening	Magic Acorns – Charly Jolly
10 - 10.30	Welcome Outline of the day Housekeeping	Joy Haynes Sophie Fox Charlotte Arculus Jess Pitt
10.30- 11.30	Keynote address: Young Children, Art and the Continuity of Life	Hans van Regenmortel <i>Chair: Charlotte Arculus</i>
11.30-12	Coffee	
12 - 12.15	Mini-Wonders Norfolk Museum service	Jan Pitman Jasmine Harvey <i>Chair: Jess Pitt</i>
12.15 - 12.45	Roly Poly interactive session	Charly Jolly Kasia Don Daniel <i>Chair: Sophie Fox</i>
1-2	Lunch	
2 - 2.45	Hanging out in the Ripples Toddlerfuturism research group	Jess Pitt Charlotte Arculus <i>Chair: Joy Haynes</i>
2.45 - 3	Break	
3-4	Youth Music panel	Zoe Kilb Hannah Dilworth Liv Corbin-Phillip <i>Chair: Jess Pitt</i>
4-5	Reflection Session	Rose Feather
5 -5.30	Closing	Magic Acorns Directors

Parking and walking in Great Yarmouth

Great Yarmouth is well provisioned with municipal car parks (P) within easy walking distance of Ripple Festival locations. Many have free parking after 4pm and some, such as the parking on South Quay, are free. More detailed information can be found on Great Yarmouth Borough Council's website: <https://www.great-yarmouth.gov.uk/article/2296/Where-can-I-park-in-town>

The blue line on the map indicates a walking route between Magic Acorns, 2 Stonecutters Way, NR30 1HF and St Georges Theatre, King Street, NR30 2PG (junction with Yarmouth way).

The route is just over 0.5km and takes approximately 10 minutes. It is a similar distance and time to walk to Magic Acorns from Great Yarmouth railway station.





The Presentations

Keynote Address: Hans van Regenmortel

Title: Young Children, Art and the Continuity of Life

According to historians, the almost complete absence of children in written sources from antiquity until the eighteenth century in the West seems to point to the irrelevance of childhood as a concept in an era in which children were seen as incomplete beings in a world of adults. It was not until the Romantic era that children appeared on the scene as a subject of reflection, often in the light of a rather mystical inspiration. Nineteenth-century industrialization ultimately led to the dominance of twentieth-century behaviorist and linear ways of thinking about the stages that a growing child goes through. Despite the particularly rich alternative ideas that were available, children were seen as fairly passive and dutiful recipients of what adults taught them.

Although the above is an oversimplification, age-old views are slowly dying in the cultural subconscious. Even though childhood is now seen as a special phase of life, children today are mainly viewed in terms of the neoliberal agenda and the skills needed to contribute to a society that is usually reduced to economics. They are being conditioned to contribute to a world in which symptomatic and consumer-oriented approaches predominate, while these are precisely the factors that contribute to the global problems in the areas of the environment, climate, biodiversity and social fragmentation.

This raises the question of how we, both adults and children, can prepare together for a future that we do not yet know, but that will necessarily be different in the sense of more connected, more systemic, more responsible, and where our rationality is embedded in a more sensory, embodied and 'grown-up' way of interacting with each other and the world.

In these confusing times, perhaps we can find inspiration in the often very connected interactions between young children and artists, as is probably most purely epitomized by the early interaction between mother and infant. We can ask ourselves what experience of the world they have in common in order to go through a joint maturation process that offers new perspectives for a world that is inevitably coming, but for which the prospect currently seems very confusing.

In this quest, the cradle of life seems to overlap with the cradle of art. In particular, the temporal aspects of the arts — for which 'musicality' can serve as a fertile prototype — enable us to investigate, connect and apply different aspects of life across domains of experience. From there, we can ask ourselves to what extent the early years can be an inspiration for adults, as the ambiguity of shared aesthetic experience offers a soft but irresistible power to further explore what it can mean to be human in a future world. Instead of us having to save the children, perhaps they are the ones who can save us.



Hans Van Regenmortel is an independent curator of art in/as education. He was previously artistic coordinator at Musica Impulse Center (BE), where he designed formats that promote musical participation and development for all ages and in different contexts. He was also a teacher of violin and creative music, as well as pedagogical coordinator in arts education.

From the beginning of his career, he has been involved in a wide range of educational art projects in formal and non-formal contexts and has contributed to various publications on art and music education. As a teacher and practitioner, he quickly became aware of the inconsistencies of common approaches, which often lead to confusing ideas about ability, learning, memory, imagination, notation, artistry and talent.

He believes that the phenomenon we call music can have a deep integrating power and sheds light on what it means to be human, to learn and to teach.

Presentation 2: Jan Pitman & Jasmine Harvey

Title: Mini Wonders Norwich Castle Museum

Norwich Castle Museum is one of eight lead museums taking part in 'Mini Wonders', an Early Years Innovation in Museums research project funded by Art Fund and Nesta. The project, which runs until Spring 2026, aims to illustrate the impact which museum collections and settings can have in supporting early years learning and development, with a particular emphasis upon supporting caregiver-child interactions.

Mini Wonders is focused upon families from areas of greater deprivation. We will talk about our experiences, to date, of working closely with children, caregivers and staff from Earlham nursery in west Norwich.



Jan Pitman

is Learning Manager for Norwich Museums. He has been involved in Museum Education for over twenty years, working with formal educational settings, community groups and the general public. Jan is particularly interested in trying to ensure that every resident of, and visitor to, Norfolk is welcomed into our museums.



Jasmine Harvey

is a Museum Learning practitioner, specialising in Early Years. She works across the Norwich Museums and has a background in both Early Years education and history. Jasmine is particularly interested in championing Early Years and SEND access to heritage spaces.

Presentation 3: Charly Jolly and Kasia Don Daniel

Title: Roly Poly

Join Charly Jolly (Roly Poly) and Kasia Don-Daniel (Little Beats) to explore ways in which play and creativity can facilitate unique connections and successful partnerships. This activity will be hands-on, with the intention of having lots of fun with cardboard.



Charly Jolly

is a musician and creator of performance pieces for children. She uses improvisation, playfulness, the voice and clarinet in her work. She is an early years specialist and interested in how to create child-centred musical performances for very young children and their families. She also works as a creative music leader and composer in the community with all ages.



Kasia Don-Daniel

manages Suffolk Artlink's early years music project Little Beats, the project aims to promote wellbeing, child development and musical engagement for 0-5's and their families in Lowestoft. As well as co-creating musical delivery with musicians and artists, Kasia's role within the project is to create a network of early years music practitioners and providers. Little Beats is in partnership with Magic Acorns, Lowestoft Rising, Suffolk Community Libraries, Norfolk and Suffolk Music Hub, The Literacy Trust, Morabe Rural Music and Britten Pears Arts. Funders : Youth Music and Music for All.

Presentation 4: Dr Jess Pitt & Dr Charlotte Arculus

Two short talks with discussion

Title: Hanging out in the ripples (Dr Jess Pitt)

By hanging out in Great Yarmouth for over 20 years playing and making with people under three, and their caregivers, a philosophy of art with very young children as research-creation is emerging within Magic Acorns. This is the fruit of the collective of artists-educators-researchers who are curious with young children and their adults, in this place, together. This relationality coalesces around people under three and their more-than-adult ways of knowing, being and improvising in the world. The practice is underpinned by curiosity, improvisation, community and care.

Recent research project findings help present these arguments; in particular the accrued practice-wisdom of artists working with the very young which is situated in a closed circle, remaining unseen, unheard and undervalued. The positive fruits of listening to very young children; making and creating with them, is not without fragility and vulnerability. There is little statutory funding for creative work with people under three, leading to a reliance on funding that can be short term, competitive and outcomes focused. Discussion after this talk will be guided towards how we can generate waves of power to influence and disrupt attitudes to young children and art.



Dr Jess Pitt

is an early childhood musician-educator-researcher; she is Creative Researcher, and Co-Director of Magic Acorns. Jess worked as music practitioner at The Priory Children's Centre in Great Yarmouth from 2001-2009, leaving to study for PhD with a full scholarship from The Froebel Trust.

Returning to The Priory, she was the researcher for the SALTmusic project (2016-2018). In 2018 she started a part-time post as Lecturer in Music Education at The Royal College of Music bringing playful music pedagogies to both under- and post-graduate students. There, she continues to supervise a number of doctoral students with early childhood music-related projects. Her freelance work includes consultancy locally, nationally and internationally.

Jess is a commissioner for the Early Childhood Music Education Commission (ECME) for ISME (International Society for Music Education) and is a Director of Sound Sense - The UK professional association for Community Music. Her own research is situated (entangled) within the practice of Magic Acorns.

Title: The toddlerFuturism research group (Dr Charlotte Arculus)

toddlerFuturism is a playful and speculative idea that emerged out of magic acorn's wavelength project. Charlotte will expand on how the notion might evoke a positive ethics and creative methodology that foregrounds the subjugated knowledges of children.

toddlerfuturism presents a post-grown-up world where adults are rediscovering how to listen.

During our wavelength residency turbines, shingle, wind, sand, wing, space become wild ingredients to re imagine the future as toddler – a future where time, space and curiosity resonate with boundless potential.

A 10–15-minute provocation with films followed by discussion.



Dr Charlotte Arculus

is a bag lady, vocalist, improviser, creative theorist and audio-visual artist. At heart of her creative inquiry is the exploration of emergent group expression. Her academic work with young children draws on feminist materialist and posthuman philosophy and has been described as having world-leading originality. She recognises that young children are far, far better at some things than adults. Things such as improvisation and the alteration of time...

Charlotte is a founder member director of Magic Acorns and has been a freelance artist for 4 decades.

Panel Presentation: Zoe Kilb; Hannah Dilworth & Liv Corbin-Phillip
Title: What is co-creation with 2–4-year-olds?

Exploring co-creation: Can we define co-creation? What does it look like? Commonalities, tensions and questions we have in our different approaches.

This session joint-led by Youth Music and Made with Music will explore some of the early findings from the Energiser Fund – a fund that is supporting 11 organisations to deliver creative programmes with 2-4-years-olds. Centring children’s voices, views and lived experience, the fund is exploring co-creation in creative projects for early years. The 11 organisations have been delivering their own creative programmes and coming together regularly to reflect and share practice.

A year in, we will present the journey of the fund so far, including the drivers behind the fund and our early findings from our learning community; including explorations of defining co-creation and the commonalities, tensions and questions that are coming from the different approaches to this work across the 11 partner organisations.

Then will be an opportunity for attendees to reflect with each other on these initial findings, discuss and explore how co-creation sits within your work, and reflect on the commonalities, tensions, and questions you and others find in this work.



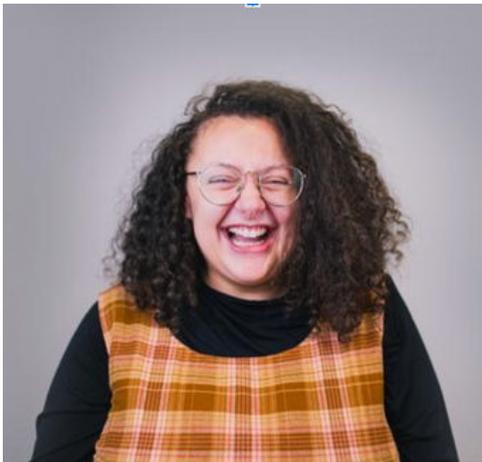
Zoe Kilb

is Head of Grants at Youth Music, a national charity supporting marginalised young people (0–25) to make and monetise music. Zoe leads on the charity’s early years work, including the Energiser Fund, which supports 11 organisations working with 2–4-year-olds. With a background in arts education, project management, and facilitation, Zoe has worked with cultural and community organisations such as Discover Children’s Story Centre and MK Gallery. She is currently completing an MA in Early Years Education.

Made with Music is a Leeds-based charity, running everything from baby music sessions to family singing events and accessible gigs. We are passionate about creating inclusive music spaces where everyone – regardless of ability – can fully participate and enjoy live music. Hannah Dilworth (Co-Director at Made with Music) along with Stories with Liv, are excited to share some of their findings and methods used in their Youth Music Energiser project making sure that disabled 2–4-year-olds are included in the research, and their “voices” are heard.



Hannah Dilworth (on the right) is a creative professional with 20 years’ experience across arts, culture, and education. She has worked as a musician, educator, theatre producer, vocal coach, and is co-founder of Made with Music. Passionate about accessibility, Hannah creates opportunities for families to experience live music. Through collaborative projects and innovative programmes, she’s dedicated to building inclusive, creative spaces where everyone feels welcome and connected through music and the arts.



Olivia Corbin-Phillip is a storyteller and literacy consultant specialising in early years. Liv specialises in interactive and responsive storytelling that put children at the centre of the adventure. She is interested in how stories find themselves in all areas of our lives, and in particular how they present in the play and oracy of young children. Liv is an advocate for early years workforce, championing the work of practitioners and teachers to make the academic work and arts-based research reachable to those on the ground in nurseries and schools.

Presentation 6: Rose Feather

Title: A Thinking Making Sharing Book

Rose Feather will share some examples of picture books she has co-created with babies, toddlers, children and families. We will then be invited to a hands-on thinking and making session with the aim of turning all the whizzing thoughts in your brains and the scribbles in your notebooks or phones into handmade books to share with friends and colleagues. A way of reflecting on the day together.



Rose Feather

is a community picture book maker, illustrator and arts facilitator based in Norwich. She has been making picture books with groups of people including babies and toddlers for the last 5 years, commissioned by museums, galleries, small festivals and heritage organisations. Rose has a BA in Illustration and Animation, an MA in Museum Studies, and a background in managing schools programmes in museums and galleries.