

# PERSONA COLLECTIVE

- **Site-specific, immersive theatre**
- **Multidisciplinary arts projects**
- **Community-led arts education**

Persona Collective C.I.C brings together community members and creative practitioners to devise and perform site-specific, immersive theatre. Persona is a vehicle to create an accessible platform for community-led arts education and creation.

*“We bridge communities and take art, design and performance out of their traditional ghettos. We create and stage extraordinary events in unexpected places layered with cultural heritage but at risk of slipping from living memory”*

Website: [www.personacollective.co.uk](http://www.personacollective.co.uk)

Instagram: @persona\_collective

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## **THE COLLECTIVE**

We are an interdisciplinary team of creative practitioners from the fields of theatre, dance, design, architecture, film & education. Together we collaborate to produce site-specific, immersive theatre that is co-created with and performed by a diverse, intergenerational group of beginners and amateurs drawn from the local community.

Our team also uses Persona Collective to develop skills in related fields and experiment and innovate through cross-disciplinary, collaborative working.

Lead by Rocio Ayllon, artistic director & founder of Persona Collective, with over 10 years experience making site-specific, immersive work with communities around London; Satu Streatfield, currently working as Mayor's Design Advocate in lighting & nightlife, practicing urban designer and researcher with 15yrs+ experience in lighting design for art, exhibitions, events and public space; Jose Macabra, 15 years working with disadvantaged groups currently Sound Arts lecturer at UAL and Music teacher at SAE Institute.

As a company, we are at the forefront of making site specific work with non professional communities. Our artists are entirely diverse - from 6 countries, 69% LGBT+ community, 23% working class backgrounds, 38% females. We are passionate about creating narratives with communities & individuals like us, found outside of mainstream theatres. This work will take audiences off the 'beaten track' as we follow 3 Soho storylines of marginalised LGBTQ+ voices.

## **COMMUNITY**

Community is central to Persona's ethos and runs through every element of each of our projects. From the locations we work in to our method of devising theatre it is what keeps things interesting and allows us to create depth and relevance in each performance, giving each of our cast and collaborators a sense of ownership and connection to their work.

Our projects define a space for encounter and help to forge social and creative networks. Each project forms the focus of personal and collective exploration and creation, where each participant is integral to the creation of the final piece.

Each of our performances is created organically through a series of workshops open to communities surrounding to our venue. Each of our projects take place in a different location/community in London; throughout the initial stages of the pre-production we identify and form cross-sector partnerships and collaborations to address social issues affecting the different communities in which we will work. We believe strategic partnership increases our program's impact, ensures we are meeting a need that is actually there and helps with the engagement strategic.

The aim of our workshops is to build group understanding of how to work together to create a shared visual language, develop new skills and support the creative potential of each individual involved.

## **LOVE+ project - Soho 2022/23**

Working closely with Soho's LGBTQ+ communities & local business community, we will co-create a site-specific theatre production & interdisciplinary programme of creative workshops to create a post Covid-19, intergenerational celebration.

In collaboration with 14 creatives we will deliver four months of Performance workshops & Design for Theatre labs, 3 weeks rehearsals, 15 live shows & a co-created documentary film of the project.

We want to give a voice to the Young LGBTQ+ community & Olders 55+ and bring them together in an intergenerational way and connect people after Covid-19. These groups share experiences of marginalisation & isolation: NatCen '20 reported 48% of young LGBT+ feel excluded in the wider community and/or family. AGE UK '22 reported 3m (24%) feeling less close to family, 5.1m(41%) feeling lonely. Opening doors '21 report Olders LGBT+ more likely to be single or living alone.

During the project we will bring local LGBTQ+ & older people together through a safe, facilitated devising process, we'll combat isolation in both of these communities with social activities, supporting health & well-being through sober/third spaces, movement workshops designed for all types of bodies & disabilities, skills sharing, breaking financial barriers by offering free arts education & accessible tickets prices and creating an inclusive space for the multiple.

We will reach these community groups through affinity group partnership. Marketing for Open Calls to attend PERFORMANCE+ workshops & DESIGN+ labs ~35 participants includes: Printing 50 x A4 posters + 200 x A5 fliers (to be distributed between our partners and local businesses collaborators in Soho), plus 12 x days Instagram sponsor. For community engagement, we rely on organic reshares on Instagram. Our main partners and collaborators are instagram users. Their total number of followers is more than 223,000.

### **Community workshops**

PERFORMANCE+ workshops offers participants an opportunity to co-create a theatre piece with a diverse, intergenerational group; learn dance & acting techniques; develop improvisational skills to tell a story & build characters; practice creative writing (poetry, monologues, short plays, etc.); create and stage solo work; perform in front of an audience.

DESIGN+ labs offers young people an entry level opportunity to the lighting & sound design practices & to apply learnt skills to multiple types of spaces - galleries, unconventional venues, theatres. Design in response to a particular place e.g. a barbershop, a chapel. They learn about the language of light and its visual expression, soundtracks creation; use of tech & programming software; consultation, planning, design & execution of sound & light for live shows.

*\*Our community workshops are completely FREE of charge.*

### **Project timeline (according to Arts Council England application):**

**18/11/2022** - Promotion OPEN CALLS, share with partners & collaborators

**18/11/2022 to 09/12/2022** - Recruitment PARTICIPANTS

**13/12/2022** - Workshop (1) 'PERFORMANCE+' Intro/open day with participants. From that date onwards, every Thursday evening till entering the rehearsals period.

**10/01/2023** - Lab (1) 'DESIGN+' Intro/open day, with participants, designers, artistic director & art director. From that date onwards, every Tuesday evening till live performance days.

**27/02/2023 - 25/03/2023** - Rehearsal period + installation lighting, sound and sets

**26/03/2023** - Dress Rehearsal

**28/03/2023 to 16/04/2023** - Live Performance x 3 weeks (5 shows per week)

**17/04/2023 to 20/04/2023** - Filming week

**25/04/2023** - Project Ends

### **LIVE PERFORMANCE FORMAT**

The audience will embark on an intimate journey across multiple secret locations throughout Soho & Chinatown. From a barbershop to a chapel, weaving through hidden passageways. They will be immersed in a multi-sensory experience between fiction and reality. Each group of the audience will be following one character's story whilst witnessing threads of multiple narratives throughout their journey; They will feel as though they are immersed in a film.

From the start of the project, we will be working with 5 local businesses (show venues) & build an art/set installation in an empty show, all in Soho. E.g. We are Cuts is a barbershop in Soho since 1979, famous for being a subculture hub. Daniel the current owner will participate sharing past & present stories of their shop, then participants & creatives will build on his story with new narratives that respond to the reality & history of the site. During the live performance the space will be theatrically activated with performance, lighting, sound, costumes & props.

### **FILM**

We will make a feature-length Film of the live performance the week after the show days. We usually use film for video installations and projections during live performances to document the process. Since our last production - The Halfway House - to explore filmmaking within theatre as an unexplored genre. This year we will have on board an amazing team of filmmakers and professional equipment to make the film based in Soho & Chinatown; the audience will have the opportunity to discover the parallel stories all at once.

## **PARTNERS & COLLABORATORS**

Arts Council England will be funding LOVE+ project, together with a crowdfunding campaign we are launching in middle November 2022 and potentially Edward Harvist Trust.

We will be working with multiple partners:

Local organisations in Soho: Museum of Soho, Covent Garden Dragon Hall Trust, Zero-One Studios, West End Community Trust, Covent Garden Dragon Hall Trust, Sir Simon Milton Foundation (Silver Sundays), Thames Leveck, St. Ann's Church, We are Cuts.

LGBTQ+ organisations: LGBT+ Community Centre, Queer Youth Art Collective, Opening Doors 55+, , QPOC project, Raze Collective, Queer China UK.