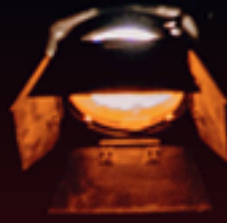


Theatre
Exchange

Immediate
Theatre



RECLAIM
THE
STREET

Nov-Dec 2025

RECLAIM THE STREET

Community Tour

Project Overview

Reclaim the Street is the 6th touring production created by *Theatre Exchange*, providing entertainment by and for older people, and taking it to audiences who rarely or never see live entertainment.

This year's production was co-created by the group of 11 performers who range in age from 59–88. Long term participant, Christine Taylor took on a leadership role in scripting the show and acting as musical director. The group successfully achieved their ambitions of creating a narrative with a relevant message which had them all singing and dancing in unison.

Sally wants to inspire us to protest about the challenges faced by older residents on the streets, but passersby have other ideas and want to celebrate the joys of staying alive – an important message, a raucous and entertaining show.

The show toured to five venues in Hackney & Newham in November/ December 2025, performing in a range of venues from Chats Palace, to the more intimate setting of a Sheltered Accommodation block in Dalston Lane, and reaching an audience of over 200.

“It was so entertaining... Makes me want to show off my talent”

The Process

In January 2025 the ensemble began discussing the creation of the new show looking to develop the ideas from a sketch used in the 2024 production *Off the Cuff* about the challenges older people encounter on the pavement. The group built the show on the lessons learned from past performances and the feedback given by audiences – i.e. covering issues which the audience found relatable, including music and songs, dancing and laughter.

Initial ideas were tested at *In Progress* sharing in July 2025 in front of a group of peers from the Newham and Enfield, *Jazanne Art*, drama groups. Feedback was very positive, endorsing the choice of theme and audience participation elements. Fundraising efforts to cover additional production costs (set, choreographer, transport etc) were unsuccessful but it was agreed that we would mount the production on a very restricted budget.

Over the summer, group member, Christine Taylor, and Jo Carter, Artistic Director, developed the ideas into a script. Rehearsals started in September with Christine working alongside Jo as Musical Director and Choreographer. They were supported by Tiziana Silvestre (Creative Connections Manager) and joined by Ashley Hodgson, Musician, in October, and Carina Vogelsberger as Stage Manager in November.

Christine created choreography for *Route 66* which used hand jive to involve the audience, she also adapted *Staying Alive* which became the climax of the show with the whole company singing and dancing in unison. Everybody had a clear character which they invested with their own ideas. Participants worked on characterisation, choreography and physical theatre sequences, learning about breathwork and enunciation, timing, and rhythm firmly putting the show in the musical theatre genre.

The company was very pleased with this work because it brought them back to a scripted piece and learning lines, but they also felt challenged by the new elements and the sense of ownership and union between the members and for the final product.

Performances

The first live performance was at St Paul's Church in Hackney and was brilliantly received. It was a great start to overcome any fears, kinks and worries about performing on a raised stage and to boost the performers' confidence in front of warm and enthusiastic audience.

The group toured to a variety of venues adapting well to the distinct locations, between bigger audiences and spaces, to more intimate spaces like sheltered accommodation. They were quick to modify elements to make the show work, supported by the staff team who were present at every performance. There was huge support from Immediate Theatre staff, who also doubled as front of house and hospitality.

Though several regular *Theatre Exchange* members were unable to perform due to ill health the majority of the team were able to attend every performance, that spread over three weeks, giving them time to rest and recover. Unfortunately, on the way to the last performance a member of the team was taken unwell – the ambulance crew refused to drop him to the venue as requested. However, the team quickly stepped in, with Ashley picking up the musical numbers, and the show was a success.

The diverse audience was very enthusiastic, encouraging and engaged with our actors, before, during and after the show. This engagement was very much appreciated by audiences who do not often get to meet people beyond their groups.

The show at Navarino Mansions' sheltered accommodation was particularly exciting for the company given that they last performed in such an intimate space in 2023. The performance was well received by the audience and was praised by the company as one of the best in the 2025 tour. The same day we performed at Chats Palace for family and friends. The conventional theatre space was also welcomed by the company and pushed them to adapt to yet another layout, adjusting exit and entrances and timing.

Tour Schedule				
Date	Day	Time	Location	Audience
25/11/2025	Tuesday	2.30-3.30pm	St Paul's Church	39
28/11/2025	Friday	2-3pm	Community Links	27
02/12/2025	Tuesday	2-3pm	Navarino Mansions	26
02/12/2025	Tuesday	7-8pm	Chats Palace	60
08/12/2025	Monday	2-3pm	Frampton Park Baptist Church	57
Total				209

Across the performances **45%** of audiences were of the global majority.

In Hackney representation was high from:

Black British, Black African, Black Caribbean, Afro Caribbean, Black Caribbean and White (mixed), Jewish, Turkish.

At Community Links in Newham, representation was high from:

Asian Indian, Asian British, Asian Bangladeshi, Asian Pakistani community.

For the first time in two years, we performed in a sheltered accommodation with people affected by long term health issues.



Images - Theatre Exchange performing *Reclaim The Street*, at Chats Palace, Hackney.

Audience Feedback

We have worked on an enhanced feedback form for our audience, introducing more questions about wellbeing outcomes and allowing space to comment about agency and perception of power.

The response was extremely positive. We collected **159** evaluation forms which reported that **95%** thought the show was either “excellent” or “good”.

Below are some examples:

What did you like best?

“The empowerment message, that elders need to reclaim their rights”

“The comedy , the people having a loud and positive voice, the music”

“It was so entertaining as usual, makes me want to show off my talent”

How did attending the show today make you feel?

98% replied ‘happy’ or ‘uplifted’ demonstrating a shift in perceived wellbeing following the participation in an artistic endeavour.

What will stay with you from this event?

“The fun and joy of the group working together to create the show. The part that ordinary people can pull this off.”

“It tells me we all have talents that need discovering!”

“I loved the fact that young (keyboard player) and the not so young worked so happily together!”

“Ageing isn't as scary as I thought. I can actually join group like the immediate theatre to keep active as or when/if I make it :)”

Do you often see live entertainment?

43% percent said either “Never” or “Rarely”. This demonstrates that we are still reaching audiences who have had little access to live entertainment.



Image - Reclaim The Street Audience.

The Participants Experience

At the end of the production the participants were asked to complete an evaluation form and give feedback through paired reflective story sharing and group discussion. The response was overwhelmingly positive in showing impact of the work, with participants reporting that they learnt new skills and developed their confidence. **100%** of the participants said that they had fun in taking part.

Surveys analysed skills development showing that:

100% of participants reported improving in all areas of performance, falling in line with the skills building desires of the participants as part of the feedback following the "...in progress" sharing event in July 2024 and 2025.

100% of the participants reported that the process allows them to build confidence "a lot" or "quite a bit". And **100%** reported developing skills and achieving personal goals.

B.S. aged 74 shared: 'the difficult task of verbally opening the show was very much out of my comfort zone. It became easier as the run progressed. She now has an "inkling" that she would like to explore writing and performing her own poetry.'

W.F. aged 67 joined in 2024 and had a small role in the *Off The Cuff*. This year he had a major role which he created himself writing a hip-hop song which he performed as a police officer. He stated I did definitely gain more confidence. I definitely was getting better at it all the time, feeling more confident. Yeah, it was good. That's the big thing. Yeah, I want to write more songs. I want to do more singing. I just want to write anything. I've got one or two ideas, so I'm feeling pretty inspired.

E.L. aged 88, had the first big role in this production. 'I was one of the characters who lived on that street. I learned what to do from how I was instructed. But I made my own interpretation when I was sitting down. I wanted to keep interacting a bit with the audience, laughing, making gestures, etc.'

One of her main worries was leaning and retaining lines :

'I learned to learn lines. I haven't had much experience with theatre, apart from the production we did last year. It was very nice to have a fairly big role in this show. And I think I learned a lot and my self-confidence grew tremendously. And I had great fun. I learned to have great fun with it.'

C.T., 76, a seasoned participants and part of the *Theatre Exchange* core group, took a leading role:

'The change this year, or the new thing this year, was that I wrote quite a lot of the show'.

she reflected about her own journey in writing but also about the progress and ownership on the characters journey of her fellow peers : 'And for me, that was really important, to look at how people could take ownership of their character and how it could be like the way they wanted it to be or how they thought they could perform well'.

J.M., 59, started with *Theatre Exchange* in 2024 and struggled with being in a group and finding her voice, both literally and figuratively. But she felt like she achieved that: "I started off as a very shy child with no voice, no one listening to me. And since I've been here, I've got a voice. And I didn't realize how I was able to actually project it. Yeah, don't want to boast but I feel that I am able to project my voice."

T.S., aged 79 found the challenge of the play very fulfilling. She said 'I tend to get distracted and I find... organising my thoughts quite tricky. I'm very good at being receptive and knowing what people mean and less good at being an active person. I think I'm more receptive than active, so I have to be careful.' in this process she grew because 'we had to have responsibility. Yes, we were given responsibility in devising things and doing. So I was challenged to do that.'

Participants attributed their success to the work of the creative team, particularly the presence of director Jo Carter, who supported the cast with structured rehearsals from September. They were very complementary to Christine Taylor and her huge effort and creativity and support for the whole cast and the support of the music director Ashley Hodgson who many knew from the previous year.

Partnership work

Despite having less time for outreach with partners, we were successful in hosting support organisations at 3 venues, the other two not being appropriate. We also provided tea and cake for the audience whilst they looked at the stalls before the show started. This was a welcome addition, much enjoyed by stall holders and audience members.

Below: all the organisations who joint, by venue.

St Paul's Church – Hackney

London Borough of Hackney - Money Hub Outreach Team
London Borough of Hackney - Resident Participation Team
Gam Federation – Combatting gambling addiction

Frampton Park Baptist Church – Hackney

Hackney Circle
London Borough of Hackney - Resident Sustainment Team
Hackney CVS
Gam Federation – Combatting gambling addiction
Volunteer Centre Hackney – Together Better

Community Links – Newham

Our Newham
Well Newham Hub
London Borough of Newham
Ageing Well
Gam Federation – Combatting gambling addiction

We didn't host any community organisations during the shows at Navarino Mansions and Chats Palace.

Challenges

This year, challenges were rooted in the lack of additional funding for the production and tour. The uncertainty created by this issue had repercussion on the booking timeline and venue affordability – we had for example to cancel the Dugdale Art Centre and we couldn't find a suitable alternative space in Enfield.

To gather support from community groups requires significant in person outreach as staff at these centres are often overworked and rarely have time to engage with emails. Our *Creative Connections* Manager was also busy with other community-based projects. We were very disappointed that one of our regular groups – Hackney Caribbean Elderly Organisation were unable to attend as they had booked a visitor for that date.

It is important to get dates set and shared with community organisations as early as possible.

Opportunities

We were able to perform at Navarino Mansions where the audience was smaller in number but very enthusiastic and welcoming. One of our performers is a resident there and we were pleased to be able to fulfil his ambition to perform to other residents.

This format is an engaging and enjoyable format for everyone involved and can be repeated.

Hosting health and wellbeing organisations and duplicating a winter warmer format, offering refreshments and a show proved an excellent way of bringing the community together across two boroughs.

Photography: Carina Vogelsberger



Image - Reclaim The Street promotion picture

Immediate Theatre

The company's purpose is to involve communities in making theatre that inspires wellbeing, breaks down barriers and engages people in the process of personal and social change. Our work is:

INCLUSIVE

Working at the grassroots and celebrating diversity

INTERACTIVE

Involving communities throughout the creative process

IMAGINATIVE

Finding new ways of engaging with vital issues

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Thanks to our funders

