Shop Front Theatre
ARCHIVE 2009 – 2022

Safe, welcoming and inspiring

Shop Front Theatre was an integral part of Coventry's bid to be UK City of Culture 2021. When you are bidding for a title such as City of Culture, stories that are unique are critical and being home to UK's first dedicated Shop Front Theatre, and the values of welcome and access that it represented were at the bids core.

The theme of *Underground*, which ran through the whole bidding period, was also born from Shop Front Theatre:

> *A city built on a hidden river has been the birthplace of new movements, myths and legends. From Lady Godiva's silent journey of revolution to the creation of 2-Tone, Shop Front Theatre and the Green Party, Coventry has found space for subcultures, peaceful protest and new ways of experiencing the arts.*

Excerpt from Coventry's Initial Bid – Submitted to the City of Culture Judges in 2017

The bid's first event for local businesses was held at Shop Front Theatre, introducing many of them to the space for the first time. Also during the build-up period the Trust supported Theatre Absolute to hold the city's first Shop Front Festival which saw over 70 performances of theatre, dance, circus and visual arts take place in shops across the city, including the bed department of IKEA.

I have too many memories to possibly recount but my overwhelming memory of the space (as fab as it was) will be the people in it. From meeting Marius who went on to support so many City of Culture events, to Paul and Jen from Shoot who became good friends, to the many times I stopped by for a show and glass of wine accompanied by a good chat with Julia and Chris.

In particular, when bidding for City of Culture became particularly pressurised, I always knew I could pop down to Shop Front Theatre and grab a cup of tea with Julia and she'd always have the best advice. Shop Front Theatre was a fantastic space where I spent many hours, but its legacy will continue within all of those who found it safe, welcoming and inspiring.

Laura McMillan