

Fire Station Opening Event & Participation Programme

A Joint MAC Trust & Cultural Spring Commission

Main Purpose of Commission

The MAC Trust and The Cultural Spring wish to commission an individual, organisation or partnership to conceive and lead an ambitious participatory programme that culminates in an exciting, large scale, public event to celebrate the opening of Sunderland's new participatory arts space, The Fire Station in November 2017 and signal the first component of the Sunderland city centre MACQ (Music, Arts and Culture Quarter). The MAC Trust will work in partnership with The Cultural Spring to manage this project. The Participation programme will be three separate strands delivered by Live Theatre and Dance City (taking up satellite tenancies in The Fire Station) and Sunderland Music Education Hub (SMEH)

Background

The MAC Trust was formed in 2012 to help lead Sunderland's regeneration using the city's cultural offer as its main impetus. It is a consortium partner of The Cultural Spring alongside University of Sunderland, The Customs House and Sangini; a member of the Sunderland Cultural Partnership Leadership Group and, most recently, a core partner, alongside Sunderland City Council and University of Sunderland in the development of Sunderland Culture, a new venture that sees the merger of the city's main venues owned by the three partners. As a partner in Sunderland Culture it will play an integral role in the bid to become UK City of Culture 2021.

Its plans to develop the city-centre MACQ have begun successfully with a £2.5 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to renovate the 1907 central fire station into a centre for participatory activities in the performing arts with a focus on young people. It has recently been granted a further £6 million to develop a purpose-built midscale auditorium at the side of The Fire Station to open late 2019. It is now looking at further development opportunities in the MACQ which also houses the large-scale Empire Theatre and a small-scale music and performing arts venue on the first floor of The Londonderry public house.

The main partner in this project, **The Cultural Spring**, is the Sunderland and South Tyneside Creative People and Places programme, funded by Arts Council England to raise engagement in the arts amongst local communities. This project will represent one of The Cultural Spring's major commissions. Past major commissions of The Cultural Spring have included Wildwork's *A Great Night Out*, the *Summer Streets Festival* and *Inventors* led by Dominic Wilcox.

Live Theatre is based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and specialises in new theatre writing, producing its own productions and programming touring work. It will deliver participatory activities around drama and writing for children and young people in its satellite studio in The Fire Station.

Dance City is the dance agency for the north east of England. It has its performance base in Newcastle upon Tyne and delivers activities throughout the region. It will deliver a programme of dance based activities for its participants in The Fire Station.

Sunderland Music Hub works with schools, teachers, practitioners, young people and organisations across the Local Authority, to ensure all young people can access a high quality music education. The partnerships provide a range of music education activities from instrumental tuition, ensembles, access to progression routes, singing opportunities and large scale performances and events.

Commission details

1. Participatory Programme

- To conceive and direct an overarching narrative that provides purpose and content to the participation programme that culminates in the large scale public event.
- To work with our delivery partners, Live Theatre, Dance City and SMEH to ensure a communal goal
- The participation programme will be delivered in The Cultural Spring wards of Hendon, Millfield, Pallion, St.Anne's and Sandhill but will be open to participants from elsewhere in Sunderland and could include previous wards, Castletown, Red House, Fulwell, Southwick and St.Peter's
- To engage new participants and existing groups within these areas
- The participatory groups to reflect the diversity of the Sunderland community
- To engage a minimum of 200 participants
- The participatory programme activities to be primarily focussed on music, dance and drama and open to other art forms
- The participatory programme to culminate in a performance/s as part of the large-scale public event or events to mark the opening of The Fire Station
- To facilitate the legacy of both the participatory programme and the Fire Station opening event to enable ongoing activities for participants at The Fire Station and their two main residents – Dance City and Live Theatre or in the Cultural Spring wards

2. Large scale public event

To take overall artistic leadership and direction of the large scale public event/s that will:

- Be innovative and ambitious in scope
- Be of the highest artistic quality
- Include the participatory element within the event
- Utilise as much of the building as is feasible – both internal and/or external
- Liaise with Live Theatre, Dance City and SMEH as potential further contributors to the event
- Align with at least one of the three City of Culture themes: Light, Invention, Friendship
- Be relevant, diverse and inclusive for the Sunderland community
- Attract a minimum of 2000 spectators
- Increase the profile of culture locally, regionally and nationally

3. Other

To be responsible for all professional recruitment, contractual, technical, health and safety, local authority liaison and budgetary aspects of this commission

4. Dates of Commission

Five months July – November 2017, with the final public event/s in November 2017

5. Amount of Commission:

The fee for this commission is £55,000.

The fee does not include the following which are paid directly by MAC Trust/Cultural Spring:

- Participation programme costs
- Marketing
- Documentation of Project
- Evaluation

This fee is subject to a successful Arts Council England funding application.

Therefore applicants are asked to provide details of a scaled back version of the event they are proposing with a minimum fee of £25,000. Please refer to this as Plan B.

6. Commission Timetable –

Commission launched	Monday 3 April 2017
Deadline for proposals	Monday 22 May 2017
Community commissioning panels	Week commencing Monday 5 June 2017
Final decision reached	Monday 23 June 2017
Budget Confirmation	Monday 26 th June 2017

7. Reporting procedures

The successful applicant will liaise with Directors of both The Fire Station and Cultural Spring on a regular basis to review budget and performance.

Applications

To apply please supply a written proposal, taking into account both the full programme/event and Plan B scenarios, including:

- I. Your artistic idea including one succinct paragraph about how you would describe it to a resident living in the Sunderland area (max 750 words)
- II. Your previous experience in delivering similar scale commissions and a brief biography of the key organisations and or artists involved in your proposal

- III. How your project connects to The Fire Station, The Cultural Spring programme and any of the key themes of Sunderland's bid to be City of Culture (max 300 words)
- IV. Please describe what your approach will be in building partnerships and developing engagement with the local communities in The Cultural Spring wards (max 500 words)
- V. Please describe how you will work with the delivery partners (Live Theatre, Dance City and SMEH) to successfully achieve your vision for the Participation Project and Fire Station opening event
- VI. Your approach to managing the project and ensuring your ambitions are deliverable (max 500 words)
- VII. Please attach a proposed timeline / workplan (including research & development, liaison with Participation Project delivery partners & communities, delivery).
- VIII. Please attach a detailed budget for the project, including any additional match funding (support in kind and /or cash) both confirmed and expected.

6. Selection

Through the application process we will assess the following :

1. Quality and ambition of the artistic idea
2. Artistic track record of the company and or individuals
3. Quality of connection to and relationship to the brief
4. Approach to working with the delivery partners
5. Feasibility and deliverability
6. Value for money

7 Contact details

For further information, or to discuss a potential proposal or arrange a site visit, please contact Helen Green, Director, The Fire Station on 0191 447 6090 or helen.green@mactrust.org.uk