**‘Caravan of Love’**

**The opening event of Hull UK City of Culture 2017**

***‘Are you ready for the time of your life?’***

***‘One by one we gonna stand up with pride’***

***‘Now the children of the world can see***

***This is a better place for us to be***

***The place in which we were born’* The Housemartins: Caravan of Love**

**Overview.**

The first and opening event of our year as UK City of culture, and the first of the season Made in Hull will be a large scale and comprehensive celebration of the city, and a statement of intent of the way we intend to (re)position the city, engage in meaningful ways with its communities, produce innovative and inspiring major events and leave a legacy from everything we do.

Caravan of Love references both a song by an internationally famous Hull band and just one of the many things Hull makes and exports to the world, caravans. It is split into three parts; Discovery, Creation and Enactment producing a year-long programme of activity where the sourcing and archiving of the material that makes the event is as important as the event itself.

Pragmatically the event lasts for four days and some content will be on hourly cycles. This is to at once challenge what an ‘opening event’ should and can be but also to ensure that we can accommodate the entire population of the city and additional visitors should they be inspired to attend. We will also host a formal moment for press and stakeholders, sponsors and funders.

**Part One: Discovery**

The memories of the city of Hull are stored in the minds, cupboards and lofts of the people of the city. We will reach out and collect this social history through a major archiving programme, be it oral, pictorial, artistic, filmic are any other media we will work within communities to access their stories. This we imagine will start with the dominant narratives of the city (the second world war, the fishing industries) but then look deeper for untold stories, new stories that enrich what can sometime be a limited narrative of the city. We will work with all the communities of Hull, working with those who may not have previously engaged with culture - What do younger people have to say? What do the new, predominantly eastern European communities have to say and share?

Starting in the first quarter of 2016 we will actively engage with the population of Hull to seek out material of all kinds and archive it as a lasting social history of the city, available to all, but used in the first instance as the source material for Caravan of Love.

We will issue an open call to the population of Hull to share with us their memories, photographs, films and artefacts of Hull’s past, both large scale collective histories as well as personal and family stories. Everyone will be invited to participate and this will be facilitated by a series of events held at the places where communities gather; community centres, shopping centres, stadiums and schools and at locations that may spark their memories, such as a former cinema, the site of one of Hull’s famous nighclubs or the docks. Working with archivists, volunteers and partner organisations including Hull University, Yorkshire Film Archive, The Hull History Centre and Hull Heritage and Learning our teams will visit each of the seven areas of Hull once a fortnight in the first six months of 2016, holding events at which the people of Hull will be invited to share their stories. These stories will be captured in an appropriate manner, oral history will be recorded, documents will be scanned and artefacts photographed.

**Part Two: Creation**

The stories that are gathered during the discovery phase will be used simultaneously in two ways, firstly to form a new archive of the social history of Hull and secondly a creative team will come together to weave together the collected memories into the ‘Caravan of Love’, bringing familiar and previously untold stories to audiences, both old and new.

The creative team will be made up of local and national talent. We will work with writers, theatre makers, composers and designers to develop the project in the third quarter of 2016. As the narrative is developed and ideas are honed, a volunteer cast and crew of hundreds will be auditioned and their training will begin, they will develop existing and learn new skills including movement, singing, acting, dance and backstage skills. In the 4th quarter they will put these skills to use as rehearsals begin and sets, props and costumes are made.

**Part Two: Enactment**

Caravan of Love will be staged over a long weekend (at least) along half a mile of road in Central Hull. The road will be closed (itself a statement of how the city will be given over to its citizens). We will take the format of a Christmas market, but through the use of caravans what will be ‘on sale’ will be the stories and memories of the city. Artists will sell there commissioned wares, story tellers will give one on one performances, community groups will sing, theatre groups will take inspiration from the discovery and stage small performances inside and out.

Over laid, projection mapped on the buildings of the street will be archive film of the Hull through the years. Buildings that once stood will live again projected on those that replaced them. Sophisticated mapping will see horse and carts once again travel the streets of Hull. Soundscape artists will take collected material and produce evocative soundtracks along the road.

Additionally volunteer performers will take the source material and turn it into large scale processions, choral works and enactments of key moments in history, but in a way that speaks of the future of the city as it becomes city of culture. These volunteers will be part of the larger Hull 2017 volunteer programme, they will be trained in new skills and offered opportunities for personal and career development.

We will use the history of a road to tell the history of a city, the road will be become a 360 degree performance space and auditorium. The facades of buildings will become canvases for large scale projections; the shop windows exhibition spaces, their doorways open in an invitation to enter and experience the familiar in new and exciting ways. Memories will be evoked as buildings are returned to their former use, their roofs, balconies and windows will become stages and the roadway itself will become the stage for pageant and procession.

There will be no linear narrative, the audience will be free to wander, explore and discover, guided by a specially commissioned sound scape, at times experiencing intimate moments at others sharing a collective experience with their fellow audience members.

Caravan of Love will not be a history lesson or high art, but will speak of what Hull has achieved, what it has endured and perhaps most importantly where it is going. It will tell the story of a proud, ambitious and future facing city, it will welcome the people of, and visitors to, Hull and set the stage for a year of celebration and wonder.

***‘Are you ready for the time of your life?’***