

## Hull UK City of Culture 2017 – Emerging Companies Showcase Report

New Diorama Theatre

31 January – 4 February 2017

**Hull UK City of Culture 2017** and **New Diorama**, working in collaboration with Hull Truck and University of Hull, presented the best and most innovative emerging companies from the city in a showcase of talent as part of its **Made in Hull season** last month.

Hull has always been a hotbed of performative talent, and this showcase week provided an opportunity for London audiences to see the next generation of theatre-makers from the city in an incredible week-long of double-billed productions.

With **90% of performances** totally selling-out, the week was an extraordinary success, which more than lived up to its promise to be bold, rebellious, immediate and fun. Showcasing new work by companies such as **Middle Child**, London premieres for new, young writing companies like **Bellow Theatre** and the Sunday Times award-winning **Pub Corner Poets**, and a longer run for Hull-Truck Associate Company **Silent Uproar**, audiences were able to whet their appetites with a rich, diverse mix of what the Hull theatre scene has to offer.

Press coverage for the festival week was substantial, with features in **The Stage**, **Evening Standard** and **The Guardian** all selecting it as a ‘Top Theatre Pick’ from all theatre shows opening across the Capital.

**David Byrne**, Artistic & Executive Director of New Diorama, explains that the impetus behind the week was *“to build the profile of the companies, flag up the amount of **under-the-radar activity in Hull**, and also help to develop peer relationships.”* The latter being crucial if fledgling work is to develop and get more ambitious.

For New Diorama, the Emerging Companies week was a fantastic way to showcase the talent of new and exciting theatre-makers from Hull, expanding the regional offering of the theatre as well as NDT’s profile across the Capital and nationally. For Hull City of Culture, this platform provided a solid foothold in the London press and Arts scene, engaging an audience of theatregoers who might otherwise not be aware of the exciting and vibrant new work coming out of this year’s City of Culture. Audience numbers far exceeded expectations, with over **630 people** attending **10 performances** across **5 days**.

Hosting a special Hull City of Culture celebration event at the end of the showcase week, there was an opportunity for artists, funders, press and industry to be invited along to see the work of some of the most exciting emerging theatre companies in the UK. NDT played host to **two sold-out houses**, first for Silent Uproar’s **A Super Happy Story (About Feeling Super Sad)**, followed by Pub Corner Poet’s **Sad Little Man**, with audiences giving universally positive feedback on performances.

The first performance of the evening was a **captioned performance**, programmed as part of New Diorama's Access Programme which offers captioned and relaxed performances across its full season of work. The captioned performance played to a full house (a consistent trend with NDT's captioned performances, cementing the appetite from deaf, deafened and hard of hearing audiences for exciting, smaller scale work).

*"I particularly loved the buzz around the week of work from emerging companies from Hull, and was delighted that it included a captioned show. It really piqued my interest in what's happening in Hull this year, and made me want to visit and see more."*

*Without captions I'm always at least one step behind, frustrated and irritated that I can't understand, and as a consequence alienated from what's happening on stage. Captioning gives me a seamless experience and enables me to have direct access to the performance - I'm experiencing the performance dynamics at the same time as everyone else."*

**(Christine Hathway, Caption-user and former STAGETEXT Volunteers Manager)**

For the companies themselves, the Hull City of Culture Emerging Companies Showcase represented a brilliant opportunity to utilise the platform of a central London venue to both engage with **new audiences** and gain **press coverage** for their work. With all companies walking away from the week with press coverage either online or in print, *"it's a smart decision to give these emerging companies wider exposure."*

**(Lyn Gardner, The Guardian)**

### **Press Coverage for the Hull UK City of Culture 2017 Emerging Companies Showcase**

***"Critic's Picks – Event of the Week."***

***Hull City of Culture Emerging Artists Showcase – New Diorama Theatre, London***

*To mark Hull UK City of Culture 2017, the New Diorama Theatre, in collaboration with Hull Truck Theatre and the University of Hull, is presenting a showcase of new work by the city's emerging companies. Running until February 4, the line-up includes work by Silent Uproar – A Super Happy Story (About Feeling Super Sad), written by Jon Brittain – Bellow Theatre and Middle Child, the company behind Weekend Rockstars."*

**Natasha Tripney – The Stage**

*"Hull Truck cannot possibly support every new company that is springing up – it needs help from the wider theatre world. Because what is good for Hull is good for the entire UK theatre ecology. The New Diorama doesn't just provide a London space, but offers companies help with funding applications and more. It is an enabler and genuinely believes that the way to run a theatre is by concerted acts of kindness. It's not a National Portfolio Organisation, but it is more generous than many bigger, core-funded, organisations. They should take note."*

**Lyn Gardner – The Guardian**

*"I had the pleasure of sitting in on Middle Child's (rehearsed reading), whose production of Luke Barnes' All We Ever Wanted Was Everything will be just one of many stirring and inspiring pieces of theatre we can expect to see in Hull this year."*

**Samuel Sims - A Younger Theatre**

*"When the curtain comes down on the Hull City of Culture, it will be judged by what is left behind. Showing a commitment to young and emerging artists right at the start of the festival suggests there is a determination to create a legacy that could really put Hull on the theatrical map."*

**Lyn Gardner – The Guardian**

*"New Diorama artistic director David Byrne said "thrilling work" had been produced in Hull in recent years. He said: "This London showcase is the perfect spotlight to show off the considerable talent of some of the UK's best companies. I can't wait to really see these Hull companies shake up our London audiences."*

**David Hutchison – The Stage**

*"I think challenging the preconceptions about a place is important wherever that is. Hull hasn't always been the first to shout about its achievements or the great things about living and working here. It's an honest, open and vibrant city with a strong personality and that's what I love about it. For me, it's about getting that across."*

**Samuel Sims - A Younger Theatre**

*"The director of Hull's City of Culture festival, Martin Green, said: "Hull has a wonderfully vibrant theatre scene, with immensely talented and energetic people creating new work that we want to reach the widest audiences possible...This showcase is a brilliant introduction to some of the terrific companies that Hull is home to."*

**David Hutchison – The Stage**

*"At the New Diorama's Hull showcase, I didn't catch the Pub Corner Poets' latest, Sad Little Man, but there is already a buzz around both the company and writer Josh Overton, who won the best playwright award at the 2015 National Student Drama festival. I saw a rehearsed reading of Middle Child's latest, All We Ever Wanted Was Everything, an enormously ambitious piece spanning two decades, from 2007 to 2027; Bellow Theatre's gently poetic and salt-tinged storytelling show, Bare Skin on Briny Waters; and Silent Uproar's A Super Happy Story About Being Super Sad, written by Jon Brittain, with a mix of wit and low-key emotion that suddenly grips your heart. For all these shows, music is an essential component."*

**Lyn Gardner – The Guardian**