



The Impact of Sherman 5 on Communities Facing Social Exclusion March 2019

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In 2013 Sherman Theatre was one of six arts organisations across the UK to be invited to receive an unsolicited gift over a five year period as part of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation's celebrations for its 25 year anniversary.



The gift resulted in the launch of Sherman 5. Over the past five years Sherman 5 has transformed Sherman Theatre: it is now at the heart of everything we do. The impact of the nature of the gift from Paul Hamlyn Foundation cannot be underestimated: the fact that the project was funded for 5 years giving a substantial period of time to develop the project along with the support received to develop our own way of working. As the project evolved we were able to explore and experiment and to alter activities accordingly to achieve our end results: Sherman 5 has been an ever-evolving entity.

At the heart of Sherman 5 is a commitment to opening up Sherman Theatre to a broad range of individuals and groups, particularly those who have not attended the Sherman before – to, quite simply, increasing diversity.

Sherman 5 came at a pivotal time for Sherman Theatre. A time where we were re-establishing ourselves as an organisation and firmly placing our audiences at the heart of everything we do. We are a civic resource for the communities of Cardiff and Sherman 5 has enabled us to truly reach all of the communities of Cardiff and to actively engage with them. Our members, our partner organisations and our collaborators through this project have enabled us to make fundamental, innovative and sustainable changes to our organisation.

The funding allowed us to employ a full time Sherman 5 Coordinator, and 2 years into the project a further member of the team in the shape of a part-time Sherman 5 Administrative Assistant. Individuals qualified for Sherman 5 membership if they were the first-time attenders and were residents of a Communities First area and/or were members of one of Sherman 5's partner groups.

The objectives of Sherman 5 have informed the ethos of both the project and the Theatre as a whole. We set out to diversify Sherman Theatre's audience by identifying and engaging with groups and individuals who may not have otherwise attended. We built sustainable relationships with community partners in the arts. We aimed to explore and develop tailored and bold initiatives to tackle any barriers which may prevent disadvantaged groups and individuals from engaging with our work, breaking down the 'them' and 'us' mentality and to ensure that disadvantaged audience members feel valued welcome and included.

Importantly, by the end of the five years, we wanted a true legacy in the form of new audiences, a portfolio of successful initiatives, a network of community contacts, and a company-wide policy regarding engaging with disadvantaged people.

Research undertaken at the outset of the project identified a number of barriers to attendance and perceptions of theatre-going. Members and potential members of Sherman 5 cited cost of tickets, cost of transport, lack of confidence, and the perception that theatre was for wealthy, privileged people as the main reasons for not attending.

The membership was set up to provide new members with their first ticket free and subsequent visits for £5 per ticket (£2.50 for under 25s, in keeping with the Sherman Theatre model of half price tickets for Under 25s). Assistance with transport to and from the theatre was also made available, along with a discount at the Café Bar.

Importantly, there was additional support at specified Sherman 5 performances. Initially a great deal of support was provided to Sherman 5 members, particularly on their first visits to the theatre. We recognised that the act of going to the theatre may have been alien to many of our members and so we offered support in a variety of ways. We offered informal introductory sessions to demystify theatre and to familiarise members with what to expect. In the formative years of the project we held specific Sherman 5 nights where additional support for members was in place alongside the provision of pre-show activities to welcome people.

As the project evolved we developed specific strands of work to support particular groups, this has included the inception of our Deaf Theatre Club, an Older People's Network, work with Refugees and Asylum Seekers, and the development of activity with blind and visually impaired members. We have been able to provide support and training for staff members, volunteers and Sherman 5 Reps in the areas of basic British Sign Language, Dementia Friendly training, and in supporting touch tours.

By the end of the 5 years of support from Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Sherman 5 had **3,738** members, **114** partner groups, and **95** Sherman Reps. Over the course of the project, we received **9092** Time Credits, the equivalent of **4546** tickets and **1036** Time Credits were earned by Sherman 5 Reps.

Value of Time Credits

Our collaborative relationship with the Tempo Time Credit network has been intrinsic to the Sherman 5 and Sherman 5 Rep scheme. Time Credits work very simply: for each hour that an individual contributes to their community or service, they could earn a Time Credit. This Time Credit can be spent accessing an hour of activity provided Tempo's corporate and community partners, or gifted to others.

It became clear that incorporating Time Credits into the core of the scheme could provide a sustainable model to support Sherman 5 after the initial funding had come to an end.

Beyond widening access to productions and events at Sherman Theatre, however, we have also been committed to providing wider opportunities for Sherman 5 members to engage with the theatre and the arts. The model is one of initial engagement and then participation: what might start as a transactional relationship becomes, we hope, a collaborative one. It represents a movement from diversity to inclusion.

As members began to attend more frequently, we identified opportunities for them to become more involved with Sherman 5 and so established the Sherman 5 volunteering programme – Sherman 5 Reps. The Reps undertake a wide variety of activities including volunteering in the venue; promoting productions and events in their communities; supporting Sherman 5 by facilitating mailings; and providing buddy services for Sherman 5 members requiring additional assistance when visiting Sherman Theatre. This meant that as well as spending Time Credits in the Sherman, Reps could also earn Time Credits.

Earning Time Credits has proved an important and effective way to incentivise individuals' involvement with Sherman Theatre. We place huge value on our Sherman 5 Reps and the time they give to us and recognise the mutual nature of this relationship. Earning Time Credits aids retention, rewards people for their time and supports individuals to access and experience a life-enhancing activities in which they would not otherwise be able to participate.

Being a Sherman 5 Rep:

“I went to the UK Theatre Awards on Sunday. Before I would have felt out of place. I felt more on a level with the Sherman staff. Even though they were producers.”



The story of Sherman 5 has been one of organic change and has been a journey from diversity to inclusion, from dependence to independence, and from loose links to established partnerships. It has also been a story of effective communication and shared learning, both within the theatre and the wider sector. And throughout the course of the project we have often sought the views of our members and responded to independent evaluation to make sure that the story we are telling is a story that our members want to hear.

“Sherman 5 gave me back my self respect. I was allowed to be who I was at the time. I could get a sense of worth. Before the Sherman, I had been ill for a long period and I couldn't value myself because I couldn't see anything I was accomplishing.”

We have been able to evolve a project that truly meets the requirements of the intended members – this has been achieved due to the time to research, consult, try new ideas, learn and develop the project. We have been able to deliver genuine and meaningful engagement with members, establishing long-term and mutually beneficial relationships. Sherman 5 has become firmly embedded within the organisation with all members of the wider team and Board having the opportunity to participate in activities and to take ownership of their input to the initiative.

The ability to collaborate and engage with partner organisations and to be able to commit to ongoing activities over a sustained period has been vital to the success of Sherman 5. As a result of all of this, we have been able to identify the project as a leader in this area in Wales and to share the experiences with others in the sector through a variety of platforms.



Sherman 5 has had a huge impact on the Sherman Theatre and has informed how we have approached everything over the past five years: the Sherman 5 membership now has a voice in everything we do as an organisation. We have learned the value of having dedicated members of staff leading and embedding this project, allowing it to grow, establish itself and to influence the entire organisation. Everyone in the theatre knows what Sherman 5 is, what it does and why it is so important.

New audiences are firmly at the forefront of everyone's thinking at the Sherman Theatre, from all teams across the organisation, to the senior management team, to the Board of trustees. Sherman 5 has provided us with the feedback of engaged and committed individuals and we are constantly collecting nuggets of information about the communities that we engage with that the organisation wouldn't necessarily know about if Sherman 5 didn't exist. This feedback and subsequent insight into our audiences allows us to be constantly evolving as an organisation to improve the customer experience for all audiences, not just Sherman 5 audiences. Our Sherman 5 members are a microcosm of our wider audiences and we have been fortunate to develop such close relationship with them to be able to glean that invaluable feedback.

Nothing can tell the story of Sherman 5 better than the stories of Sherman 5 members and so to mark the culmination of the project we organised Sherman 5 Stories in July 2018. As part of the celebration we created films about a number of our members which can be viewed on our website: shermantheatre.co.uk/Sherman5



A significant amount of quantitative and qualitative evaluation has been undertaken over the five years of the initial project. The monitoring and evaluation process took the form of audience panels, online and in-person surveys, as well as statistical analysis and the gathering of case studies – these reports can be made available on request.

Sherman Theatre has been successful in securing further funding from Paul Hamlyn Foundation to further develop and enhance the Sherman 5 programme over the next 4 years. This funding will help us to develop the Sherman 5 model and better embed our community links to improve resilience. Whilst maintaining the core Sherman 5 offer, we will be:

- Developing targeted strands modelled on our Deaf Theatre Club that will overcome specific barriers for key groups;
- Expanding our volunteer group and the opportunities available, providing more structured personal support and training to further deepen community relationships;
- Developing current and new partnerships to leverage additional resource, and working more closely with Tempo Time Credits to reward engagement and support an active and networked model;

- Undertaking ongoing evaluation of impact and processes to support sector sharing and advocacy with policy makers.

Our aim for our audiences and participants is to provide greater access to the arts; improved ability to engage with culture independently; improved confidence, social connections, agency, and personal and creative skills / development; and employability.

For Sherman Theatre, we are aiming to achieve more diverse audiences; deeper links with and understanding of our communities; better networks; and improved case for support, sustainability, profile and ability to influence the sector.