

CREATIVE HUB

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DECEMBER EDITION

Welcome to your monthly update on all things creative in Exeter. In our December edition writer Chloé Jarrett-Bell interviews *The Red Shoes* exhibition designer Simon Costin, Quirk tell us their wishes for the creative industry and we announce our Phoenix Archive Project Commissions!

What have you been up to this month?

Have a piece of creative news or an opportunity you'd like to be shared? Send us a message and we'll include what we can in future editions.

We have a new Instagram account!

Follow us @exeterphoenixcreativehub to get even more updates, stories and opportunities in Exeter.



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Quirk Theatre: Creative Wishes



We caught up with Quirk ahead of our annual Christmas theatre production to chat about their creative process and experience of collaborating more closely with young people in this year's show, *Five Children and It*. Producer Katie Villa talks about the importance of introducing young people to the creative industry at an early age, as well as her own wishes for the industry in the South West!

‘Five Children and It’ has been co-created with young people - what was the process like and was there anything that surprised or inspired you?

We always R&D our work, which is usually a process of getting a load of people, ideas and inspirations into a room and playing about with material to see what has potential (and what doesn't!). These usually happen at the Phoenix, but this year we did part of our R&D in primary schools and community groups! Embedding the process and sharing our workings with young people was completely magical and totally

barmy. For the kids it allowed them to be designers, directors, composers and writers and it demystified some of the processes of making theatre. Which was obviously brilliant. But for us, it was just fantastic to be working alongside the people who will make up the vast majority of our audiences, hearing their ideas, developing routines under their direction and seeing what they loved. The kids designed the Psammead costume, wrote songs that appear in the show, wrote the wishes that feature in the show and inspired the characters of the 5 children themselves.

Why has bringing young people into the process been important, both for you and for them?

Ach I already answered this a bit but to expand- as an organisation we are passionate about creating opportunities for creatives in the south west and this needs to start young! You can't be it if you can't see it, so it was really important to us to deliver brilliant workshops with a diverse team, so that young people could see someone who looked like them, doing a job they might be interested in. And it felt really valuable to have different focuses- for each workshop we brought in a different specialist from our team, so the children could be inspired by someone who is an expert in their creative field. We talked about the jobs that go into making a show, beyond the more obvious actor and director, and my hope is that we have sewn the seeds of a love for the arts and the possibilities of a creative career.

But also, our work is for children, often about children and so it seems only right that it is created with children. Children's imaginations are spectacular, and we also get to hear about what's important to them. We are definitely going to work this way again.



This year's show is about wishes - what do you wish for the creative industry in the South West?

A great question! I wish for interconnectedness and investment. The arts sector is on it's knees and yet still wonderful people remain, slogging away. My hope is that there will soon be better investment and by that I mean long term, joined up investment, both financially but also from a point of view of value. As a country we can definitely go further in valuing the creative sector and everything it brings. But I also feel really excited about helping to join it all up- working regionally can be really challenging, as there are often less gathering points (and more miles in between organisations and freelancers). Through Quirk we are hoping to be a part of creating and developing networks so that artists don't feel so alone. We are all doing great, hard work and sometimes we just need to know who else is out there!

Image credit: SW Theatre Photography

And a question for Sofia, Quirk's intern - what have you learned from your internship?

I have learnt so much during my time at Quirk that will prepare me for a creative career! Just being in rehearsals is one big learning experience - watching how the designers work under time pressure, the stage manager brings the set together, and the actors giving every scene their all is all so inspiring. My job is to look after the social media marketing, which I have thoroughly enjoyed doing since June. I am very lucky to work with not only lovely people but artists who are so passionate and driven about what they do! After my time with Quirk, I would feel confident to work with any Theatre company; my role has given me a great deal of social media and marketing experience and I have loved designing posts and writing captions in Quirk's style. I can't wait to see their Christmas show!

Catch [Quirk](#) at Exeter Phoenix from Sun 17 - Thu 28 Dec.



Janet Sainsbury: Points in a Constellation



Image: Barbara, oil on panel, 20.2x20.2cm, 2023

Exeter-based artist Janet Sainsbury has announced some new works on display at the RAMM, titled 'Points in a Constellation'. Janet has previously exhibited work at Exeter Phoenix in *Correspondence 01* (2021), and in the Cafe Gallery in 2018.

"I am very pleased to share details of *Points in a Constellation* a commission I received from Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter (RAMM) in Spring 2023 to create new artworks.

For the commission I chose to paint a series of portraits of women artists who have work in RAMM's art collection: two Devon-based contemporary artists, Michelle Sank and Amy Shelton and two artists with links to the south-west, Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975) and Gillian Ayres (1930-2018).

The project provided an opportunity to shine a light on women artists within RAMM's collection and allowed me to connect with and visit the studios of two brilliant local artists.

My portraits will be on display in the Core Wall, Courtyard at RAMM from 21 November 2023 till 19 May 2024.

Alongside the display there will be a short video filmed at Topos and in the museum, which will be available online. There will also be a free, drop-in event to celebrate International Women's Day in March next year."

You can find out more about the exhibition [here](#), including a video where Janet talks more about the commission in her studio in Exeter.

The Red Shoes: Beyond the Mirror, Behind the Scenes

The more ballet TV shows and films one watches, the more red pointe shoes one is likely to see. I thought painting ballet shoes red was a good ole dramatic device used to represent the classics: anger, passion, temptation, rebellion etc. That, however, changed when I watched Powell and Pressburger's *The Red Shoes* (1948). Seeing Victoria Page (Moira Shearer) battle between her love for a young composer, Julian, and her passion for dance opened the catalogue of dance films that had been locked away in the back of my mind for years. Suddenly, one of the best scenes in one of my favourite ballet movies, *Centre Stage* (2000), started to come to life. Torn between two desires, Jody (Amanda Schull) performs a passionate routine in none other than bright red pointe shoes— a now obvious homage to *The Red Shoes*.

I cannot do a cabriole or grand jeté, but I love films about ballet because they are always about the pains and preciousness of dance, yes, but so much more too. Watching this classic film that inspired so many was nothing less than a treat, yet walking through an exhibition that transported you into the very world of *The Red Shoes* was something else entirely.

I was given the opportunity by the Exeter Phoenix and Film Hub Southwest to attend the BFI's opening reception and private view of their new exhibition *The Red Shoes: Beyond the Mirror*. The exhibition was an unforgettable experience to say the least. I entered the BFI building alone, unafraid but unsure. To tell the truth, I considered the films of the 60s and 70s I watched to be old. Sure, I had studied a few early-mid 20th century films, but I was not a 'Classic movies' aficionado. As I stood in the long queue to get my wristband (which was red, of course), I marvelled at the woman in front me, who I later learned was costume buyer Dorothy Sarafoglou. She caught my attention because she was donned in a floor-length 150-year-old red Ottoman coat. We got to chatting and she soon, rather fittingly, became my red-coat guide who walked through *The Red Shoes* exhibition with me.



Much like *The Red Shoes*, the exhibition was a balance between fantasy and reality. At one point, I sat down at a recreation of protagonist Victoria Page's dressing table from the film, decorated with period perfume bottles, hairbrushes and bouquets of red, hot pink and fuchsia flowers. I felt as if Julian and Lermontov themselves were about to pop out from behind a wall and make me decide between love or dance.

As I continued to walk through the exhibition, it was as if the film had ended, the credits had rolled, and I was being let into to the life of *The Red Shoes* beyond the screen. I read letters from Michael Powell, glanced at pictures of Moira Shearer as Victoria preparing for the 'Coppelia' sequences in the film, gazed at velvet ballet costumes, and manoeuvred through real-life ballet dancers stretching in their crimson leg warmers.

Though enjoying the experience, I had many questions about this crazy ballet film world I had just whirlwind-ed my way through. In a brilliant turn of events, I had the opportunity to have my questions answered when I spoke with the set designer of the exhibition, renowned art director and designer Simon Costin:

Chloé: What from *The Red Shoes* inspired you the most when designing the exhibition?

Simon: I can't say there was one particular thing, it was more the overall tone of the film. I wanted visitors to leave their world behind them the moment they reached the top of the stairs to the mezzanine and stepped through the entrance into the draped hallway.

Chloé: What was your favourite section of the exhibition to design and why?

Simon: That's impossible to say because the exhibition was designed as a whole experience. Some of my favourite elements would be the newspaper figure, glimpsed behind the two-way mirror in the rehearsal room and the *Pepper's Ghost* effect which reveals the shoes momentarily before clips of the film obscure them. It's an old theatrical device which seemed to make sense to use, given the otherworldly mood that the film has.

Chloé: Which item was your favourite and why?

Simon: I think the Newspaper Man. Phoebe McElhatton, who painted him, made such a beautiful job. There are several moments within the exhibition where we have endeavoured to recreate settings from the film, such as Victoria Page's dressing table. The sequence in the film with the Newspaper Man was one that I found so enchanting the first time I ever saw the film.

Chloé: Why do you think the legacy of The Red Shoes has endured after so much time?

Simon: I think the Archers films were so unique then and now. As pioneers of English Magical Realism, they have never been surpassed. The ballet sequence is also one of the most breathtakingly magical ever made of a dance piece on film.

Chloé: And finally, how do you hope the exhibition impacts audiences, both long-time fans of The Red Shoes and first-time viewers?

Simon: I hope that the environment that we created helps to add several layers of make-believe to what is already a fantastical film, and to give the dozens of archival paintings and drawings a suitable backdrop for visitors to immerse themselves in.

Immersive, fantastical, playful; the team behind 'The Red Shoes: Beyond the Mirror' definitely delivered.

After weaving my way through rich blue curtains and multicoloured lights, and passed through the room of red walls, red flowers... I wondered: where is it?

Then... almost catching you by the surprise, the star of the exhibition appeared before my eyes: the sinister red shoes sat contained in glass

box. Though paling with age, they still had their famous red pigment and stood erect as if Victoria's feet were still stuck inside of them.

Victoria Page's exit from The Red Shoes was traumatic to put it lightly. The good news for me was, when the blue curtains, bright lights and red walls came to an end, I safely descended the metal stairs, and my hot pink heels obediently led me back towards reality.

By Chloé Jarrett-Bell



South West Dance Hub Update



South West Dance Hub is a space for professional dance artists and choreographers to share, learn, grow, support and be supported.

These co facilitated sessions held at Exeter Phoenix focus on contemporary dance techniques, improvisation & choreographic exercises. There is space to share your projects & explore collaborations, in a supportive space. Co-director Ruth Bell has given us an update on what they've been up to this term:

“The hub has been buzzing this term!

Our cross cultural collaborations continue to stimulate and engage artists within the South West. This is the beginning of our third year at the Exeter Phoenix. We have now expanded into two branches with the open hub offering a space for enriching opportunities to engage with dance and choreography. Our company hub allows us to create professional work and give space to dancers and makers.

This term we focused on costume within dance, Company member,



Donald Craigie led some explorative & playful sessions around how costume can inspire the imagination through physical theatre.

Co-director Ruth Bell has been developing her passion for creating wondrous costumes and seeing how the dancers move and interact within.

The visual artist Claire Taylor has been joining us again, drawing movement and taking inspiration into her own practice.

We had visiting choreographer Richard Chappell leading an exciting open hub offering inspiration and new ways of creating.

If you are a keen dancer, maker or artist from another practice interested in connecting with dancers then come and join us on Tuesdays. Keep your eyes on our social media at South West Dance Hub and the Phoenix what's on page for next term dates and cross arts focus.”

Find out more about South West Dance Hub [here](#)

Phoenix Archive Project Commissions Announced!

Applications open Mon 04 Dec 2023 | Applications close Wed 03 Jan 2023 at 5PM.

Exeter Phoenix possesses an extraordinary historical resource; an archive of approximately 5 hours of 16mm film footage dating from the 1930s to the 1960s, tracking one family's travels and activities through this turbulent period. Thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund we have been able to restore and digitise this extraordinary collection. As well as preserving this valuable resource we'll be working with project partners to hold community workshops, create public responses to the footage, hold live screenings of previously unseen film, and develop academic and creative responses, including commissions for creative practitioners to make work responding to the collection.

The Phoenix Archive contains approximately 5 hours of previously unseen footage, predominantly shot on silent 16mm film, and now restored and digitised to 2K video. Due to the fragile nature of the film much of the contents had not been viewed prior to digitisation, but tantalising clues to the contents were available through the notes written on the original film packaging. With the archive now digitised the range and quality of material present represents a beautiful and unique perspective on life in the mid 20th century. From daily life and family outings, to major historical events and word travel, the archive represents an exciting historical record.

PHOENIX ARCHIVE FILM COMMISSION

This commission is for the creation of a film which utilises the digital archive and responds to the material. Commissioned artists are free to take any creative approach they wish and must deliver a film for exhibition at the end of the commission. A version of the final output will need to be shared and made public as part of the project's exhibition and legacy.

PHOENIX ARCHIVE CREATIVE PRACTICE COMMISSION

The Phoenix Archive Creative Practice Commission is intended for creative practitioners in any medium to respond to the digital material in the archive.

The creative output from this commission can take any form, including but not limited to; live performance, poetry & literature, artists lectures, musical composition, audio visual displays, sculpture, painting, photography and printmaking. A version of the final output will need to be shared and made public as part of the project's exhibition and legacy.

Commissions are open to creative practitioners based in the south west, who are able to deliver work in Devon.

The Phoenix Archive Project is offering two commissions of £4250.00

Thanks to our funders & supporters on this project: The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Radcliffe Trust, Aurelius Charitable Trust, Exeter Communities Together, & Villages in Action.

[Apply Here](#)



OPPORTUNITIES

Exeter Phoenix Creative Hub: Workshops and Socials Survey

In 2024, Exeter Phoenix are hoping to deliver a series of short professional development workshops followed by socials for emerging and established artists and creatives. We would be very grateful if you could use this form to offer your feedback and ideas to help us shape these sessions and ensure their relevance and usefulness.

[Share your opinion here](#)

Welcome Building, Temple Quarter - Call for public artwork proposals

Deadline: 10am, Fri 05 Jan

Bricks are pleased to announce an open call for proposals for a new major public artwork. We are seeking proposals that will resonate with this bold new landmark building, at a prominent gateway site into Bristol.

The artwork should support a welcoming and socially responsive environment, reflecting contemporary and future ways of working and living.

Find out more and apply [here](#)

Applications to perform at January's Scratch Night opening soon!

Opens Mon 11 Dec | Deadline: Mon 08 Jan

Applications to perform in our January Scratch Night at Exeter Phoenix are opening soon! The successful applicants will receive a rehearsal space, the opportunity to perform their work in front of an audience and £150 to support their practice, which they can use however supports them best.

[Apply here](#)

WORKSHOP OPPORTUNITY! 12 Dec | 5.30pm - 7pm | Online

As part of VASW's online professional development programme, we are delighted to offer five places on The Kaleidoscope Network's upcoming workshop Financial Recording, Tax & Self-Assessment.

This is an excellent opportunity for artists, makers, and creatives to learn or be refreshed on the necessary skills to manage being self-employed, as well as understanding any upcoming changes to the system. Bookkeeper Neisa Reid will share a presentation, followed by an opportunity for questions and discussion.

Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis. To book your place, please email lucy@vasw.org.uk.

Space(s) - Crew Callout | Early December

Space(s) a short film from Director Luke Frsh and backed by Exeter Phoenix and Denham Digital. This film follows a young boy on his magical journey trying to transcend his environment. His bold actions lead him on an unexpected adventure.

Space(s) is currently looking for collaborators for the following roles: Sound mixer / Sound designer / Film score artist

These roles are unpaid and would need to be completed during the first few weeks of December.

If you are interested please get in touch at contact@lukefrsh.co.uk



Madame Thespia's Deliciously Diverse Christmas Carol Cabaret

ARTISTS! APPLY NOW FOR A PERFORMANCE SLOT

We invite all poets, singers, actors, comedians, film-makers, dancers and artists of all and any discipline to come and share the stage for an up to 7 min slot. Madame Thespia's Cabaret is for everyone, especially LD/Neurodiverse/Emerging/Global Majority/LGBTQ+ artists and performers. This time we ask prospective participants to categorise their act as belonging to the "Christmas Past", "Christmas Present" or "Christmas Yet To Come"! Please reserve a slot in advance by contacting thespia@four-of-swords.com

Call for Moving Image Works | Deadline: 04 Dec

awen productions invites UK and Ireland-based artists and filmmakers to submit short moving image works (up to 10 minutes) for two community-led projects in 2024. Selected works will be featured in film screening events, and artists will receive a licensing fee.

Themes:

1. Creative Voices Cornwall: Seeking artistic responses related to 'Citizen Journalism.'
2. The Sanctuary - Mousehole Wild Bird Hospital: Nature documentaries featuring bird life are sought for this project, promoting awareness of the Mousehole Wild Bird Hospital.

Find out more [here](#)

Cygnnet Theatre - Professional Development Courses and Workshops

Cygnnet Theatre have a number of residencies and workshops for performers wanting to develop their practice happening in March and April next year.

[Find out more here](#)

Callout for Theatre Maker or Makers for the CUPBOARD COMMISSION

Deadline: 04 Dec

The cupboard commission will be part of "What If...?" a Festival of Children's stories which is a project by Theatre Alibi.

Downstairs at Emmanuel Hall is a wonderful, double-doored, walk-in cupboard – part of the original, Edwardian fabric of the building. We are looking for a theatre maker or theatre makers, to draw on children's stories we'll be gathering, as inspiration for 'The Cupboard Commission', which will take place in our cupboard during the festival! The piece could take the shape of a performance or an installation, or perhaps a bit of both, its form is up to you!

Interview dates: 6th, 7th or 8th Dec.

Commission Fee: £3000

[Apply here](#)

Screen Cornwall: Open call to deliver Skills Workshops

Deadline: Fri 08 Dec, 9am

Screen Cornwall is looking for experienced professionals to deliver a series of short, practice-based skills workshops for entry and early stage freelancers, and invites proposals from across the region.

This programme of activity aims to grow the talent base available in the region as well as creating informal networks around specialist areas. We are looking for confident facilitators with relevant industry experience to develop and deliver hands-on interactive sessions.

[Find out more and apply here](#)

OPPORTUNITIES



Events

- [Workshop: The Elusive Art of Good Storytelling](#) | Tue 12 Dec, 7pm | Exeter Phoenix | Free
- [DOCLAB 23: Lab 2](#) | Mon 18 Dec, 7pm | Exeter Phoenix | Free (booking essential)
- [Slamovision Watch Party + Spork! Young Poets Showcase](#) | Tue 05 Dec, 6.30pm | Exeter Library
- [Madame Thespia's Deliciously Diverse Christmas Carol Cabaret](#) | Thu 07 Dec, 8pm | Exeter Library
- [MA Creativity 23/24 Presents: Open Studio](#) | Wed 06 Dec, 5.30pm - 6.30pm | 19 North Street

Exhibitions

- [James Paddock: Life Could Be Done So Much Better](#) | 18 Nov - 04 Feb | Exeter Phoenix
- [Hollow Earth: Art, Caves and the Subterranean Imaginary](#) | 23 Sep - 7 Jan | RAMM
- [Janet Sainsbury: Points in a Constellation](#) | 21 Nov - 19 May | RAMM
- [Jo Lathwood: The Belief in Things Disappearing](#) | 06 Oct - 15 Dec | MIRROR, Plymouth
- [Against Apartheid](#) | 29 Sep - 02 Dec | KARST
- [BRIDGIT: Charlotte Prodger](#) | 24 Oct - 09 Dec | CAST
- [Landscapes of Progress?](#) | 11 Nov - 03 Mar | Hestercombe Gardens

We are looking to understand our Creative Hub a bit better, so that we can better highlight news and opportunities that match the interests of our followers. Please scan to complete our short anonymous survey.

Have a piece of creative news or an opportunity you'd like to be shared? Send us a message on the [Creative Hub Facebook page](#) and we'll include what we can in future editions.



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