

# MONTAGE THEATRE ARTS

Montage Theatre Arts (MTA) is a charity that has been serving the Lewisham community for 21 years and throughout our history has been supported and endorsed by Lewisham Borough Council. MTA provide 39 weekly classes in areas across the borough to provide sustained access to the performing arts for over 850<sup>1</sup> people, including young people from poorer and more vulnerable families and older people (from 2 to 70+).

## IMPACT OF GRANT WITHDRAWAL

The complete withdrawal of Lewisham Main Grants funding could not have been predicted and renders us in the following position:

- **Financial** - With a challenging financial shortfall
- **Status** - Loss of endorsement and logo impacts our standing and severely handicaps our fundraising abilities with local business, funders and the local community. It also reduces our access to work in schools and publicise our work directly within educational establishments, hugely limiting our potential reach. Already 4 local schools have told us they would not advertise our services without the borough's logo/endorsement. How can we continue to reach vulnerable children without the support of schools?
- **Work with children** - The rejection of our application ignores the role we play in providing opportunities for socially or economically challenged families. 20% of our students attend via means-tested concessionary places, and over 75 children per annum access our services through free bursaries. Montage provides a unique and positive place for young people to access learning, many of whom have limited access to creative alternatives to street culture, during this difficult and insecure time.
- **Boys** - The withdrawal of funding affects our growing work with boys from poorer and more vulnerable households. Boys make up 16.2% of our student body, 42% of them are concessionary places. Given the particular challenges LBL faces with violent crime and poverty, access to opportunity is recognised as an influential factor. Early intervention such as access to the arts and skills development at Primary School level is essential as a preventative measure.

## REASONS FOR APPEAL

Severe impacts as outlined above.

Feedback states that we are not suited to funding as "Lewisham benefits from a wealth of organisations providing similar activities and it is not possible for the Council to support all of them financially". The council are however providing financial support for similar organisations, namely Second Wave, GLYPT and Lewisham Youth Theatre, who all received some level of continued funding. Secondly, MTA's bid fully demonstrated our ability to meet the general funding criteria. We provided sound local intelligence, an asset-based approach, a demonstrable ability to innovate and create enterprise, a commitment to shared values and above all, our exceptional track record. Furthermore, we demonstrated our ability to meet every 'widening access to arts' criteria laid forth during consultation and the application process.

While MTA is partially revenue funded, it would appear that our recent economic success has resulted in us being penalised. At the Main Grants Application Workshop, attendees were consistently advised to be ambitious in their plans and application in spite of the budget limitations. We could not have anticipated a total rejection of our Main Grants application.

If the panel decide that MTA is still not suited to receive funding, we ask that the panel consider a short period of transitional funding.

Finally, the loss of Lewisham borough endorsement is a significant blow, damaging MTA's outreach opportunities. Even a token level of funding from LBL will ensure MTA's continued access to vulnerable children and young people through use of the Lewisham logo on advertising materials and communication. Alternatively, we ask that the appeal committee consider continued endorsement in some form such as an 'LBL recommended provider' in order for MTA to continue our excellent work in the borough.

<sup>1</sup> MTA Statistics; 2018-2019 financial year.

**Patrons: Roy Williams OBE, Emma Thompson, Sylvestra Le Touzel and Debby Bishop**

MTA is supported by Lewisham Council, The Gordon Family Fund and the Hilary and Stuart Williams Foundation.

Montage Theatre Arts is a registered charity No: 1103460

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