

**MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL**  
**REPORT FOR INFORMATION**

**COMMITTEE:** Communities and Neighbourhoods Overview  
& Scrutiny Committee

**DATE:** 11 November 2008

**SUBJECT:** Manchester International Festival 2009

**REPORT OF:** Assistant Chief Executive

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**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To inform Members of emerging plans and proposals for the Manchester International Festival in July 2009, including details of opportunities for local people to engage with the festival.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are recommended to note the report.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REVENUE BUDGET**

There is an annual provision of £1m contribution to the Festival in the Council's revenue budget.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CAPITAL BUDGET**

There are no implications for the capital budget.

**CONTACT OFFICERS**

Vicky Rosin, Assistant Chief Executive, Manchester City Council – 0161 234 4051  
[v.rosin@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:v.rosin@manchester.gov.uk)

Simon Mellor, General Director, Manchester International Festival – 0161 238 7311  
[simon.mellor@mif.co.uk](mailto:simon.mellor@mif.co.uk)

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

MIF 2009 Press Releases – 9 October 2008  
The Ascent of Manchester – Independent Evaluation of the first Manchester International Festival – Morris Hargreaves McIntyre  
Available from Room 219, Town Hall

**WARDS AFFECTED**

All.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR KEY COUNCIL POLICIES:**

**Anti-Poverty**

**Equal Opportunities**

**Environment**

**Employment**

Yes

Yes

Yes

Yes

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Manchester International Festival, the world's first festival of original, new work was launched in 2007, to take place biennially, as an artist-led, commissioning festival presenting new works from across the spectrum of performing arts, visual arts and popular culture.
- 1.2 The Festival significantly enhanced Manchester's reputation as a leading cultural city, renowned for the successful delivery of major large scale events. The inaugural Festival was acclaimed across the UK and internationally, winning a host of awards (including 2 MEN Awards, a South Bank Centre Award Nomination and Best Music Show for Young People from the European Youth Music Organisation (for Feedback as part of The Great Indoors)), most recently acknowledged by England's Northwest Tourism Awards as the Tourism Event of the Year. It attracted over 200,000 visitors with an estimated economic impact of £28m.
- 1.3 Among the 25 world premiers in the 2007 Festival were 'Monkey: Journey to the West', a new opera directed by Chen Shi-Zheng, composed by Damon Albarn and designed by Jamie Hewlett. Performed in Mandarin, 'Monkey' has subsequently played in Paris (30 sold out performances), London – Royal Opera House (7 sold out performances) and is about to perform for 6 weeks at a specially constructed Monkey Palace at the O2 Arena in London.
- 1.4 A group show 'Il Tempo del Postino' by 15 of the world's leading contemporary artists such as Matthew Barney and Olafur Eliasson played to critical acclaim. As well as new theatre productions (eg The Pianist), site specific work 'Interiors' with Johnny Vegas, there were debates, food events and inventions and an international music series featuring Lou Reed, Kanye West, P J Harvey and Happy Mondays.

A 3 minute promotional DVD will be shown to Members at the meeting on 11 November.

## **2.0 Manchester International Festival 2009**

- 2.1 The Festival will run from Thursday 2 July to Sunday 19 July.
- 2.2 The aims of the 2009 Festival are to consolidate its position as the leading Festival of original new work, created by a wide range of major international artists. This includes sustaining relationships with some key artists across a number of festivals and working with leading cultural organisations locally, nationally and internationally.
- 2.3 Alex Poots, the Festival Director, and his team aim to create an ambitious, risk taking festival that animates the city centre, attracts a broad audience from across the region, nationally and internationally, which will gain significant media coverage, continuing to build Manchester's reputation.

2.4 The complete festival programme will not be released until March 2009. However the first three shows have been announced. These are:-

(i) J S Bach / Zaha Hadid Architects

Zaha Hadid Architects will visually and acoustically transform one of the exhibition spaces in Manchester Art Gallery into an intimate chamber music hall in which to hear the solo works of J S Bach.

(ii) Everybody Loves a Winner

Created by Director Neil Bartlett with Struan Leslie and Simon Deacon, this is a new theatrical experience co-commissioned with the Royal Exchange which focuses upon a very British institution – Bingo.

The Royal Exchange will become a bingo hall with added music and dancing and the audience will become cast members with the possibility of a chance to win.

(iii) Prima Donna

This is Rufus Wainwright's debut opera which is a portrait of a fading opera singer, set in Paris and sung in French.

Prima Donna is produced in partnership with Opera North with five performances at the Palace Theatre.

### **3.0 Involving Local People**

3.1 An important objective of the Festival is to build the creative potential of Manchester's different communities through a series of innovative, high quality community based commissions and creative development programmes.

3.2 The Festival is launching a major new creative learning programme for 2009 – MIF Creative – which will provide opportunities for local people to engage with the Festival and work alongside high profile artists and develop their creative skills. This programme begins with a new trainee producers scheme which has just been launched and will provide paid opportunities for 5 Manchester-based producers to join the Festival team and develop their producing skills. MIF Creative will continue with a series of community commissions which will provide opportunities for different community groups across Manchester to work alongside major international artists to develop new projects for the 2009 Festival. The largest of these projects will be a community procession created by Turner prize winning artist, Jeremy Deller and which will be one of the opening events of the 2009 Festival. Mindful of this project, MCC officers are working closely with the Festival to ensure that MCC's plans for a Manchester Day Parade dovetail effectively with the Festival's procession and that lessons learnt from the Festival's experience are fed into the planning process for the Manchester Day Parade.

- 3.3 It is important that the Festival maximises the opportunities for Manchester residents to attend events and this will be done through a programme of free events, discount tickets and audience access programmes. In 2009, this will include a new community box office initiative delivered in partnership with Arts About Manchester. This will provide heavily discounted tickets for all festival performances targeted at people across Manchester who have limited access to arts events.
- 3.4 The Great Indoors – which attracted in excess of 10,000 people in 2007 is programmed once again and will take place in the Town Hall over a period of 5 days and in 2009 will include a special schools programme.
- 3.5 In 2007 some 300 local people were involved as volunteers with the Festival, helping to welcome artists and the public to the City and the Festival. MIF plans to build on these volunteering opportunities in 2009.

#### **4.0 Lessons Learned from 2007**

- 4.1 One of the issues that was raised as part of the evaluation of the inaugural festival was the ticketing arrangements, felt to be inflexible and slow. MIF has appointed Quaytickets (The Lowry's ticket agency) as the ticketing partner for the '09 Festival. Working with Quaytickets will allow the Festival to operate a system where there will no booking charges for Festival tickets.
- 4.2 Whilst the festival pavilion, located in 2007 outside Manchester Central was enjoyed by many, it was also felt to be too peripheral and plans to locate the pavilion in Albert Square for next year's festival will address this. The Festival plans to add a second performance space to the pavilion it used in 2007 and ensure that there is an extensive programme of music, talks and other events in Albert Square so that a vibrant hub of activity is created at the heart of the Festival and the city.

#### **5.0 Collaboration and Support**

- 5.1 Regular communications meetings between the MIF management team and an MCC Officer Group chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive (Neighbourhood Strategy and Delivery) are taking place and a number of specific functional sub-groups have been established to ensure that adequate planning and support is provided to the festival.
- 5.2 This includes Licensing and Highways issues, city dressing and visitor experience, community events and communications, events in the Town Hall, Albert Square and the pavilion.
- 5.3 Recruitment to a number of additional key posts within the festival team has commenced and will continue at appropriate times prior to the event. Opportunities for City Council staff to undertake secondments to support the festival in specific areas are being explored, bringing excellent development opportunities where these can be accommodated from within service areas.

## **6.0 Sponsorship**

- 6.1 Although the economic environment has got considerably tougher than for last year's Festival, MIF is reporting good progress with its sponsorship activities and confirmed private sector funding for the 2009 Festival currently sits at 72% of target. Reaching the full £3.3 million sponsorship target will be challenging but the Festival remains confident that by working closely with MCC it can ensure that private sector support for 2009 Festival is maximised and that 2009 equals the inaugural festival in its scope and ambition. MIF is also pleased to report that a number of new public sector funders – including AGMA and NESTA – are supporting the Festival for the first time and that the Arts Council has significantly increased its financial support.

## **7.0 Summary**

- 7.1 Commissions and plans for the Festival are well in hand. The second Festival promises to be as ambitious, ground breaking and original as the first. The collaboration between the City Council and the Festival has been built on the experiences and lessons from the inaugural Festival and is working well. Involving local cultural organisations and providing an innovative range of opportunities to engage with Manchester's different communities are part of the Festival's core aims for 2009.
- 7.2 Further briefings for Members will be provided in the coming months, particularly as the Festival programme is launched in March 2009. Members are recommended to note this report.