



Bright Sparks Theatre Arts Company

A Community Interest Company (C.I.C.)

Established 2013

Bright Sparks Theatre Arts,
8 The Grove,
Moorhead,
Shipley,
BD18 4LD.

John Hudson - Artistic Director



John's background in theatre and performance includes acting on stage and screen, stand-up comedy and national touring theatre including several trips to Edinburgh Arts Festival. Before returning to Leeds from London, John worked as a facilitator for 'Wolf and Water' and 'Get Changed' Theatre Companies, working with disabled adults in the Devon area. John's roles in Bright Sparks are many. From leading workshops, directing, set building and lots of other 'hands on' roles; as well as funding bids and creating links with new people and groups.

Marc Walton - Technical Manager



A theatre 'all-rounder', Marc started out as a performer, but quickly realised his passions were more behind the scenes. Lighting, sound, projections, set design, props and stage management, plus some writing and directing, all come into play. Away from the stage, Marc is involved in maintaining the company website and social media; producing publicity materials and posters; and co-designing additional materials to support the projects (for example, designing the teachers' resource pack for 'Real Friends' and the 'How Do You Do' activities pack).

Jools Symons - Patient and Public Involvement



Jools is the Patient & Public Involvement Manager and Communication Skills Lead for Year 2 at the Leeds Institute of Medical Education (LIME). She has built up a community of over 180 active members of the Patient | Carer Community (PCC) at LIME and have also formed and lead the Lived Experience Network (LEN), a national community for Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) in UK healthcare education. Jools continues her research into the role of learning disabled adults as educators, teaching communication skills through our creative partnership.

Nancy Davies - Technology Enhanced Learning



As part of Leeds Institute of Medical Education, Nancy has a multi-faceted approach to Technology Enhanced Learning, with traditional approaches through many years in role, to applications of the continuing new developments in this field. For projects that have specific ties to the University of Leeds, Nancy's support of Bright Sparks Theatre Arts has been gratefully received. Her input helps to provide additional ways for students to engage in our work, through creating content for the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) based on our ideas and the themes of the current projects.

www.brightsparkstheatre.com

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West Yorkshire (UK) based theatre company



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Fiona O'Neill - Funding Bids Advisor



Fiona started as a nurse working in mental health in a variety of community and hospital settings. She became interested in how services can change and improve the value of health professionals, patients and carers really listening and learning from each other. She completed a doctorate that examined the politics of the NHS and this launched a career at Leeds University, working across the fields of education, research, and practice development. Fiona remains passionate about the value of using creative and innovative ways of learning.

Peter Smith - Board of Directors Member and Advisor



Peter Smith is a theatre and film producer specialising in Community Arts. As well as his work with Bright Sparks, he is a Director of Inspiring Arts, a Devon based company that delivers theatre projects with adults with a learning disability and Mylife Productions, a film company that works with 'at risk' young people. He also works as a production manager for several commercial theatre companies including Night-Of-Stuff and The Smog. He brings years of experience to advise Bright Sparks on a range of company practices and decisions.

Elaine Walton - Finance and Production Assistant



Elaine joined the company for 2019's 'Return of the King', as costume designer/maker and wardrobe manager for the performance. Her skills and passion have led to Elaine increasing her involvement, in a voluntary capacity, taking on several responsibilities both behind-the-scenes and during the delivery of the projects. Now firmly established as a key member of the team, with a natural rapport and popularity with our participants, Elaine's positive input and hard work is invaluable.

Tim Austin - Student Involvement Representative



A key member of the 'Over The Moon' cast, with a natural affinity for drama and performance. Tim says, "Within ten minutes, I was in front of a camera. Within ten hours, we felt like family. I first came across Bright Sparks through University of Leeds, as part of their 'Commitment To Play' initiative. My experience gave so much, making friends and demonstrating the creative power of theatre." Tim has now graduated but keeps in touch with Bright Sparks and always attends our performances. We hope to continue to receive his encouragement and advice.

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Babs Fraher - Aspire CBS Representative



With a natural ability for performance and theatre practice, as well as a passion for music and the visual arts, Babs brings to the advisory board a keen artistic eye and a passion for person centred care. She also leads on the use of integrated sign-language BSL (British Sign Language) in our performance projects. This element of our work includes both deaf/signing members using BSL and Makaton, as well as blending formal sign language with mime and 'iconic signing' in our shows, as to involve all participants in sign language inspired scenes and 'signed song' moments.

Ian Graham - Aspire CBS Representative



A stalwart care worker with many years' service, Ian has a multitude of skills and an endless passion for personal development based on participants' abilities and needs. As part of the ongoing drama work with Bright Sparks, Ian's input is invaluable. He consistently encourages, supports, and nurtures the participant's talents, bringing a joyful and fun loving (and equally focussed) attitude to the work. His roles (as actor and stage chaperone) in Abba: The Panto and Over The Moon brought an infectious energy to the entire group, helping all involved to try their very best.

Michelle David - Aspire CBS Representative



Michelle has been a regular feature on Bright Sparks projects, ever since taking part in 'Abba: The Panto' in 2017, as part of the 'Commitment To Play' project with Leeds School of Medicine, University of Leeds; and customers and support workers from AspireCBS. Michelle's commitment to person-centred care reflects our working methods perfectly, making her an ideal ongoing collaborator. Michelle also helps the company to continue to develop its Digital Inclusion Strategy, alongside involvement in the 'Life In The Cloud' initiative with Aspire CBS community hub, TechNorth.

Bernadette Spellman – Expert Group Chairperson



Bernie is a regular member of the Bright Sparks team and appointed secretary (2021) of Leep1. Her positive 'can do' attitude is perfect for making theatre. We look forward to her having a bigger role in future productions, following her magnetic (but all too short-lived) appearance in Return of the King. Bernie enjoys the visual arts and acting alike, getting involved in several aspects of our productions at once. She also advises on future content for projects as well as using her involvement to learn more about project management and planning.

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Ben Frimston – Online co-facilitator and creative advisor



Ben has worked as an actor and facilitator as well as running numerous community development programs in London and Bristol. He joined Bright Sparks as an online collaborator during the Covid19 pandemic, helping to create and deliver activities for the 'Lite Nights' Tuesday evening drama group on Zoom. His continued involvement in our work examines online strategies and working methods, helping us to get the most out of creating effective drama online. Ben also brings his love of live music and song writing to our online activities, as well as advising on possible future projects and new directions for the company.

Sammy Boxall – Online co-facilitator



Sammy inspired the 'Lockdown Breakout' project, an online fantasy roleplay game using 'Dungeons & Dragons' style gameplay elements alongside theatrical improvisation and characterisation. Sammy collaborated with Marc Walton to create the game and is part of the team delivering the weekly sessions on Zoom. Sammy is a young man on the autistic spectrum and is delighted to be involved in a neurodivergent group of friends, meeting online each week to fight monsters, find treasure, solve riddles and work as a team using our collective imaginations to move the story forward.

Ollie Sutton – Expert Group Member



Ollie is a brand new member of the Bright Sparks team, having become a frequent participant in our 'Life In The Cloud' online drama sessions. His enthusiasm and organisational skills are a welcome addition to our Expert Group. We look forward to his first-time involvement in our upcoming live projects, as company member and performer. In addition, Ollie is an established DJ in the learning disabled community, playing his mix of feel-good music to his fans, previously performing at club nights and now appearing weekly on Facebook Live (Leap1 group).

Naseem Akram – Parent and Carers' Café Group



As mother to Tauseef, a regular actor in the Bright Sparks Company, Naseem's role is to ensure the needs of the carers and families are met; and that their voices are heard. Family members can often be 'in the shadow' of a person with a disability and it can be easy to forget that they also need support. Bright Sparks are involved in setting up an online social sharing session on Zoom called Carers' Café.

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