



**YORKSHIRE
FESTIVAL
OF STORY**



yorkshirefestivalofstory.com
1st-31st August 2020
#YFOS2020

**free
online
everywhere**

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**EVALUATION REPORT
2020**



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Evaluator**

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After 23rd March 2020, as the UK locked down to prevent Covid-19 sweeping across the country, the decision was quickly reached to change and adapt to the new situation. The digital festival was born and plans became increasingly ambitious.

With guest director Joanne Harris and headline performers including Amanda Owen (The Yorkshire Shepherdess) and Tracey Chevalier, stories were told around the world, scanning a huge range of situations – from political comment, to professional discussion, to the power of music and story, to family events and all out laughter.



"It was brilliant. Such a positive thing amid the pandemic" attendee feedback

ONE WHOLE MONTH
OF PROGRAMMING
IN AUGUST 2020



83

events



56

artists



7252

people
taking part

Average audience watch time - 52 minutes

The Yorkshire Festival of Story certainly lived up to its tagline;

FREE, ONLINE, EVERYWHERE

It attracted an audience from all over the world; from Settle to South Africa and Seattle and Singapore, from Iowa to Illinois and Italy and Israel and India, New York to Norway, Australia to Arizona and even far flung places like Vancouver, Quebec and Honolulu, the festival did get everywhere.



"Absolutely world class" attendee feedback

14%

of the artists involved in the festival agreed with the statement **"this is the only piece of work I have undertaken since lockdown."**

100%

of the audience and artists agreed with our new metric, that the festival was critical and that it was **'important that this digital work was happening during Covid-19'**.



"It has been the one bright spot of covid for me" attendee feedback



People, on average, rated the festival an almost-perfect 4.6 stars out of 5.



70%

of the audience gave the festival an actual perfect score.



"On the magical side of lockdown – thank you" attendee feedback

"A RELEVANT AND JOYFUL FESTIVAL AND A SOURCE OF COMFORT IN DIFFICULT TIMES"



"It made me feel like I was actually a 'part' of the literary & storytelling world" attendee feedback



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Incredibly, despite changing to a digital festival, Settle Stories has maintained its excellent quality, as shown by the metrics.



In 2018 it outperformed all the average UK benchmarks available, and in 2020 it maintained this excellent track record, despite being a digital festival.



Provided free at the point of access, the festival smashed its fundraising targets, proving how much people rated the experience.



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INTRODUCTION

Yorkshire Festival of Story (YFOS) was produced by arts and heritage charity Settle Stories. The event had turbulent beginnings. Plans were firmly in place for YFOS to run as a live festival across various venues in Settle over the weekend of Yorkshire Day in August 2020; the coronavirus pandemic hit and changed everything. Settle Stories noticed the world had changed, with the support of Festival Guest Director Joanne Harris (MBE) their key funders Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, and premium sponsor Aunt Bessie's, they changed with it.

The event was originally planned to grow the programme and build on the success of previous years' festivals. It was to happen in Settle, a small rural town in North Yorkshire with a population of circa 2,500, over a long weekend in August 2020.

Within a few short weeks of the Covid-19 lockdown beginning on the 23rd March 2020, a fully digital, month-long programme was created by Sita Brand (Artistic Director & CEO) and Charles Tyrer (Executive Director) at Settle Stories who were supported by a small staff & volunteer team.

The story of YFOS is one of hope amidst difficult times. Artists kept their contracts and were paid; audience members were able to connect with each other and be inspired by the power of story. Sita explained, **“we built up a lot of good will with artists because we honoured our agreements which we weren't even contracted to at the time.”** This is something that relatively few organisations were able to do; many just needed more time to adapt and consider. Settle Stories went all-out, planning and delivering an ambitious and gutsy festival: a month of programming 83 events with 56 artists. One audience member told us, **“So pleased you managed to deliver the festival online rather than cancelling! Good luck for next year.”**

Settle Stories describe themselves as ‘the home of adventurous storytelling’ and the initial version of the festival was ambitious. Originally known as The Settle Stories Festival, it was renamed Yorkshire Festival of Story with its own branding and website. From the outset the festival sought to celebrate Yorkshire and attract a largely regional audience, with some national press and national attendees.

Settle Stories say, **“Our mission is to collaborate with exceptional artists to create transformative experiences for people and communities. Narrative is at the heart of everything we do. We collaborate with artists and communities to create transformative experiences that ignite curiosity and reimagine storytelling. We learn from the traditional myths and folktales of our past so we can tell the current, political stories of today.”** And that **“We push the boundaries of storytelling. We harness the intimacy of oral storytelling and experiment digitally to reach people of all ages and communities across the world.”**



It is important to note the scale of the pandemic in 2020. At the time of writing England is back in national lockdown. Jobs are at risk, many many lives have been lost and this looks likely to continue. Fear and anxiety levels are high.

“There are three different layers to the crisis all playing out simultaneously: a public health emergency, an economic disaster, and a social and cultural crisis. All of these layers have huge mental health impacts, with some parts of the population – young people, ethnic minorities, women, people living in poverty, the elderly – disproportionately exposed.” A&J Evans, Collective Resilience, 2020.

Settle Stories realised that arts could be healing, most likely due to their experience of delivering arts and health projects. Understanding that Covid-19 made storytelling and the festival more needed, despite the huge number of challenges to overcome and deliver, YFOS obviously gave Settle Stories’ small team the impetus to achieve.

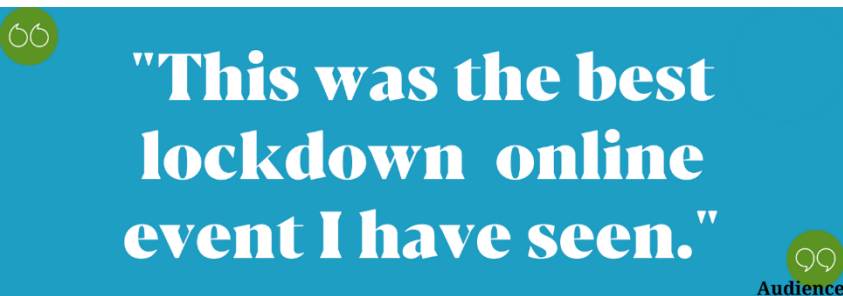
“UCL’s study of 70,000 adults’ mental health during the pandemic found that 22% were engaging more with arts during the lockdown period than usual, and that engaging in creative activities – art, gardening, hobbies, reading fiction – was the single most helpful activity for people’s wellbeing.” A&J Evans, Collective Resilience, 2020.

EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

This evaluation uncovers how the festival was delivered, the impact, and the successes. One audience member did not realise that YFOS had ever been anything other than digital. They asked **“I have not been able to find recordings of the (previous years’) festival. Not sure if they are released?”**, which points to how seamlessly the festival has happened despite the turbulent origins.

The evaluation seeks to answer the following questions of impact arising from this Festival of Story:

- What was the impact of going digital – was it the right decision, the right quality, the right technical offering?
- What was the impact on artists – as one of the few happenings during August, what did this mean for the artists?
- What was the impact on the audience - what did they think of the programme and the format, who were the audience and what did it mean to them?



Throughout this evaluation we endeavour to assimilate all the information efficiently and produce a series of recommendations that will enable Settle Stories to effectively plan for the future in what is a very uncertain time. Finally, we ask, did the festival meet its published aims?

Festival Aims

1. To produce a free festival for all to enjoy in their homes that is joyful during the pandemic
2. To make available high-quality arts activity for people in Yorkshire and further afield
3. To increase profile and reach across Yorkshire
4. To increase opportunity for Craven audiences to engage with those from different cultural backgrounds particularly those from BAME communities
5. To provide work for artists during the pandemic
6. To increase skills amongst attendees and artists

This evaluation has been completed entirely during Covid-19 restrictions. All meetings have taken place via phone and video calls. The audience and artists have completed online surveys, with 224 audience responses and 21 artist responses. The surveys were in-depth and had a high completion rate. Staff from The Evaluator attended some events during the festival itself. Interviews have been held with key staff via email and video call. In addition, Settle Stories have provided full access to Zoom and Crowdcast, and have shared insights and data from their website, social media accounts and YouTube.

From an evaluation point of view, the Evaluator team do feel that people have fed back honestly and that this evaluation has not suffered due to the Covid-19 restrictions. It is a truthful and robust account of the impact arising from the YFOS 2020.

Throughout this evaluation report, you will see quotes from people as we let those who took part have a voice and tell their own story.

PART ONE: THE YORKSHIRE FESTIVAL OF STORY

IN DEPTH ANALYSIS

Taking YFOS online meant Settle Stories had to make quick decisions about which online platform to use for the festival. They undertook extensive research in this time and chose Crowdcast as the main platform for events. Settle Stories worked with individual artists to reframe their work for the digital stage. Some artists' work had to be completely re-imagined to work online.

Settle Stories ambition was to make YFOS as interactive as possible and emulate a live festival feel online. The main online platform used – Crowdcast helped to achieve a live festival atmosphere for the audience who could use the chat function to talk to one another, could be invited onto the screen during events if they chose and ask questions and vote on questions to be asked of the artists. Zoom was used for all festival workshops which worked well as the platform allows all participants to see each other and the workshop facilitator and interact face to face. Workshops were all very popular. Workshops for adults ran at full capacity. A small number of YFOS events took place on YouTube.

66

"It was amazing!!! I'm so pleased I heard about it. It was so well organized, functioned seamlessly. It has been the one bright spot of Covid for me."



Audience

In terms of value for money Crowdcast events cost 49% of the overall budget but attracted 74% of the audience and 88% of our core measure, 'audience minutes.' 'Audience minutes' is a term which uses the total audience multiplied by the total minutes of the show or event and shows engagement. Using this measure events on Crowdcast

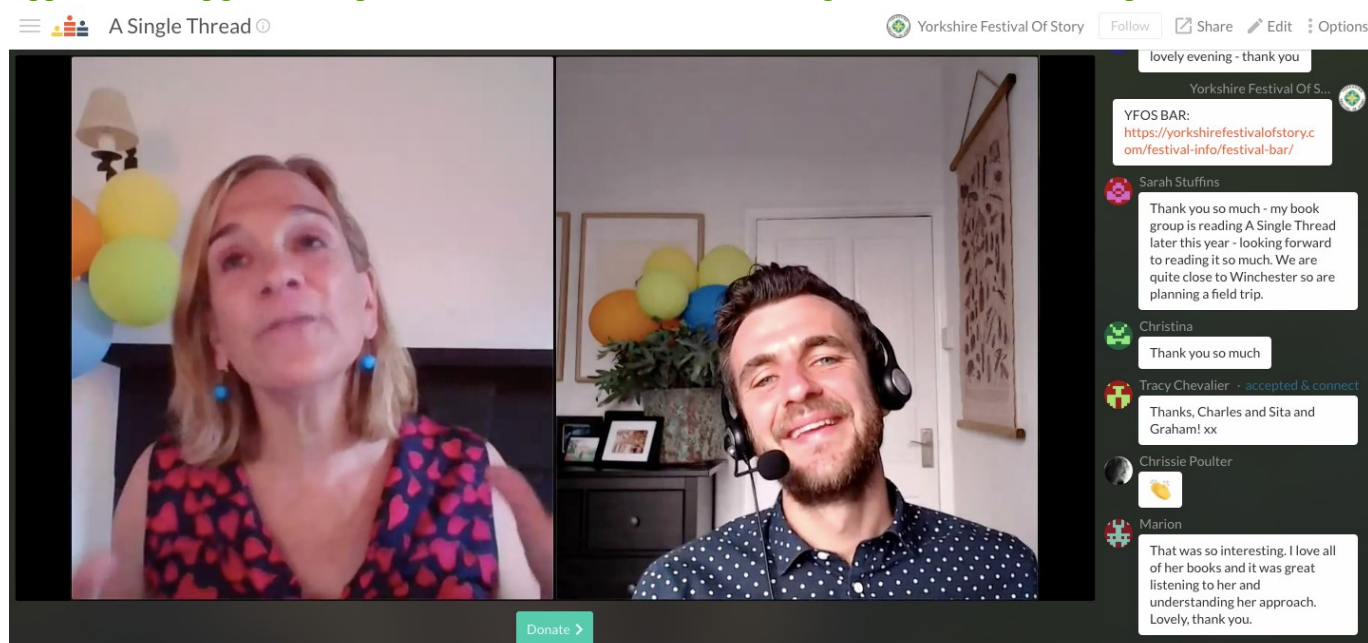


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represented far better value for money than events than took place on YouTube and Zoom. Events created for YouTube did not represent value for money. YouTube events are available online for perpetuity so engagement will continue. However, it is this constant sense of availability which perhaps leads to low engagement. There is no sense for the audience that if they don't watch the event now, they will miss it. YouTube does not provide a sense of a shared watching experience or interaction with artists or other audience members unlike Crowdcast and Zoom. It is recommended that workshops are programmed for future festivals. Demand outstretched supply for all adult workshops. Settle Stories should explore if these can be run in a more cost-effective manner. However, the cost of the programme is not the only measure of success. Workshops provide the audience with a more in-depth experience. They also contribute to a well-rounded and diverse programme.

Charles explained, **“Live events are clearly the way forward - I think the fact the majority of the festival was live made a huge difference and was key to our success. I certainly would want to do more of this next time and focus far less on pre-recorded pieces on YouTube, etc. - they are valued less by the audience - it just becomes part of scrolling on their social feed and they're not as engaged.”** Appendix one, pg.'s 45-50 provide an event breakdown showing audience size and the platform used.



Charles interviewing award winning author Tracy Chevalier live on Crowdcast.

Table 1 (below) shows that the main platform used - Crowdcast held 48% of the events and cost around 46% of the budget but gained 72% of the total audience and 88% of the total audience minutes. YouTube in this case did not represent value for money, costing half of the budget and providing 7% of total audience minutes. The other show here relates to one event, live streamed on the web

TABLE 1: SORTED BY PLATFORM

Results	Number of events in total	% split of number of events	Total Spend	Total Spend as %	Total audience	Total audience as %	Total audience minutes	Total audience minutes as %
Crowdcast	37	48	£ 10,390	46	5251	72	334650	88
Zoom	9	12	£ 1,000	4	200	3	15750	4
YouTube	30	39	£ 10,750	47	1646	23	27405	7
Other	1	1	£ 500	2	155	2	930	0

TABLE 2: SORTED BY FAMILY OR ADULT AUDIENCE

The programme spend and line up is roughly half geared towards families however adults make up 71% of our core measure of ‘audience minutes’, representing better value for money.

Results	Number of events in total	% split of number of events	Total Spend	Total Spend as %	Total audience	Total audience as %	Total audience minutes	Total audience minutes as %
Family	43	56	£13,338	59	3020	42	110165	29
Adult	34	44	£9,302	41	4232	58	268570	71



FAMILY ACTIVITY PACK THAT WAS CREATED FOR YFOS

TABLE 3: SORTED BY HEADLINER OR COMMISSION

A significant proportion of the cost of the festival is spent on headlines and commissions. Although the number of commissions represent 21% of all events, they cost 61% of the total budget. This does not translate to larger audiences, as headlines and commissions only reached 32% of total audience minutes. Although this is an overachievement of the total proportion of events (21% of events attract 32% of the audience minutes) it does bring into question the concept of value for money. This question needs to be considered with all the wider information though – headlines and commissions are likely an important reason for attracting Arts Council England funding, and headline acts do support the marketing needs of the festival too.

Results	Number of events in total	% split of number of events	Total Spend	Total Spend as %	Total audience	Total audience as %	Total audience minutes	Total audience minutes as %
Headline or Commission	16	21	£ 13,900	61	2718	37	120665	32
Not	61	79	£ 8,240	36	4534	63	258070	68

If we look at attendance in the chart below – we can see a steady increase over time with a very large rise for The Yorkshire Shepherdess on Monday 31st August. A large jump happened on Saturday 15th August too, where Forgotten Tales and Travellers' Tales attracted a lot of interest. From a purely marketing perspective (regardless of availability and other issues), putting the main headline earlier may have helped build the audience and awareness.

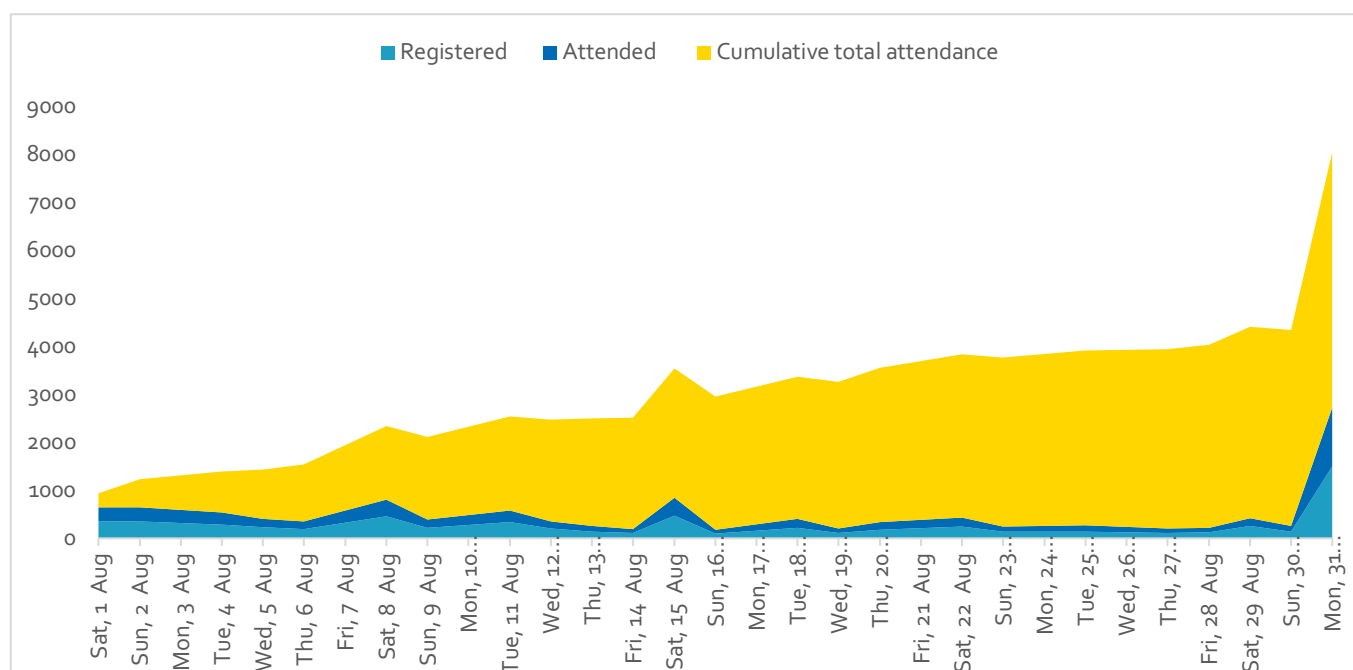


TABLE 4: SORTED BY DAY OF THE WEEK

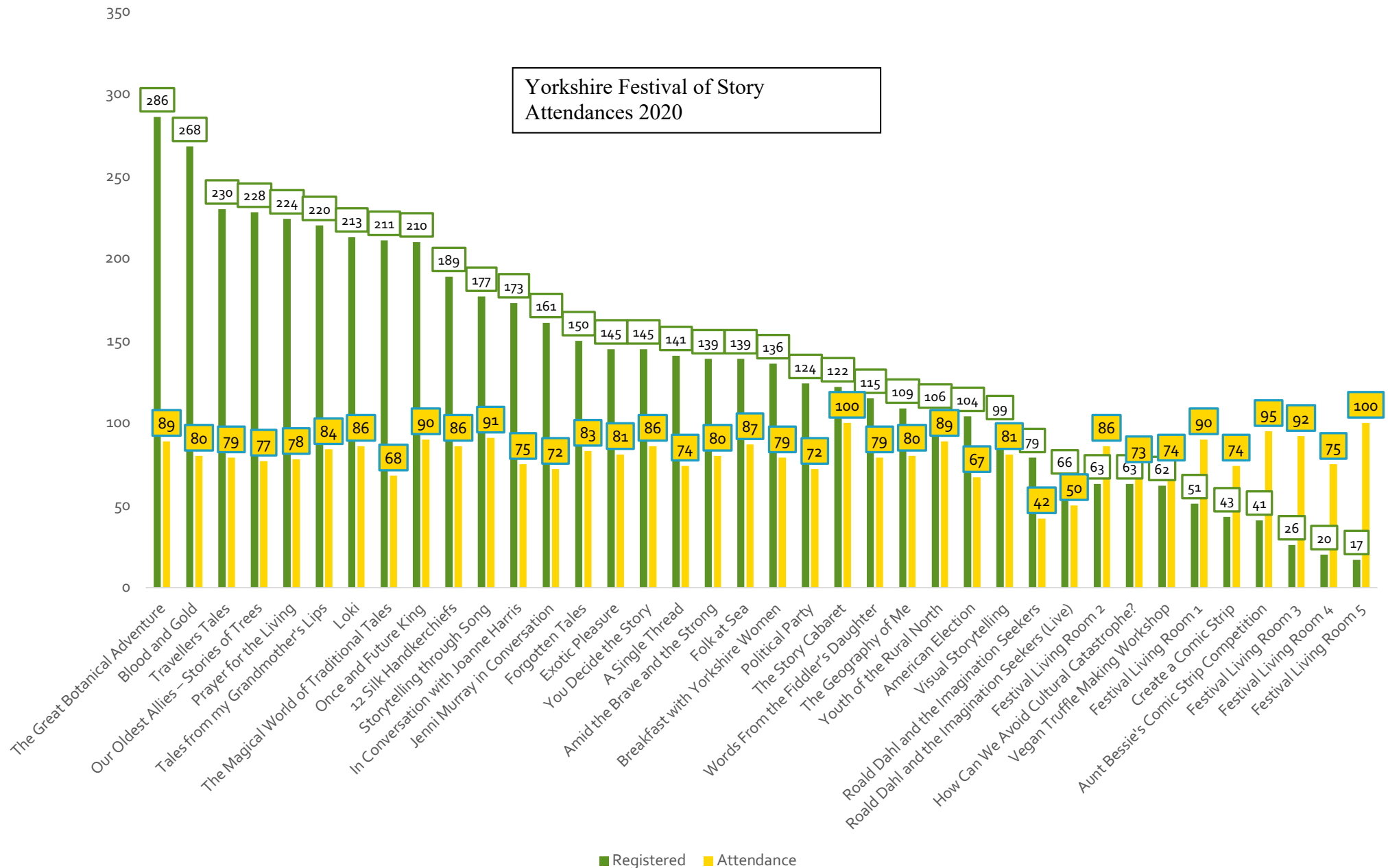
This table below shows that there is a clear spike on Saturdays, where 27% of all the programming happens, and this translates neatly into 25% of the total audience minutes too. The data for Mondays are heavily skewed due to the well-attended headline performance of Amanda Owen, The Yorkshire Shepherdess, on a Monday. The reason for analysing the data by day was to try and understand if the government programme 'Eat Out to Help Out' had an impact. The low attendance figures for Wednesday and Friday suggest not, and that programming on Tuesdays and Thursdays was a good idea and a popular time.

Results	Number of events in total	% split of number of events	Total Spend	Total Spend as %	Total audience	Total audience as %	Total audience minutes	Total audience minutes as %
Mon	5	7	£ 2,000	9	1666	23	80025	21
Tues	11	15	£ 5,225	24	1027	14	65005	17
Wed	8	11	£ 600	3	469	7	26100	7
Thurs	9	12	£ 638	3	650	9	38455	10
Fri	8	11	£ 3,190	14	654	9	20535	5
Sat	20	27	£ 4,263	19	1562	22	94665	25
Sun	14	19	£ 6,225	28	1069	15	53020	14



Sita hosting a discussion 'Travellers' Tales from Across the Globe' with headline artists. Kevin Crossley Holland (top right), Festival Guest Director Joanne Harris MBE (bottom left) and Ben Okri OBE (bottom right.)

Yorkshire Festival of Story
Attendances 2020





"Sincerely hope the festival and similar events happen again. It was a meaningful and important break from the pandemic. Each event our family attended, together, was a time to leave the pain and challenges of these difficult times for a bit of peace and laughter. As a disabled person, the opportunity to watch from the ease of my living room was an added bonus. Although I did miss the exciting energy of a Settle Festival. Am well impressed with the energy the Settle Story facilitators showed at each performance, and the balloons were a nice festival touch that helped bring the dispersed performers together. It was hugely generous to offer a free (by donation) event and am well grateful to the sponsors. I hope this will continue. I would not have been able to attend the number of events I did, if I had to pay individually for them."



Audience

When looking at the graph of all events, and the amount of people registered and the percentage who attended The Yorkshire Shepherdess event skews everything and the chart is more useful without it. The Yorkshire Shepherdess had a registered audience of 1,502 people, and 81% of those attended.

When looking at the table on page 12 it is clear that the lowest percentages of those registered managed to attend, in the daytime. Maybe people find it easier to commit to an evening? Or is it that work events and family events happen during the day and these are the ones where something occurs and people can't attend? So, is it the time or is it the audience?

In 2020 the digital festival held on Crowdcast attracted 6,597 registrations and, on average, 81% of those attended – 5,322 people. Approximately 70% of those watched live and 30% watched on replay over the next 24 hours. The fact that Crowdcast events were on for 24 hours but no more, created a sense of scarcity and helped build audiences. It seems if audiences knew something is on forever, as with the YouTube shows, they might not get around to making the time to watch it and it can be put off time and time again. Creating a window when it could be watched was important – but 30% of the audience watching on catch-up. It may be worth trialling some 48-hour availabilities; if this does not significantly affect the 30% then it probably isn't worth doing.

ATTENDANCES

Full Audience YFOS 2020			
Crowdcast	YouTube	Zoom	Facebook
5,251 total attendances 2,250 minutes of programming, across 37 events 334,650 'watched' minutes in total (88% of the total)	1,646 total attendances 465 minutes of programming, across 30 events 27, 405 'watched' minutes in total (7% of the total)	200 total attendances 480 minutes of programming, across 9 events 15, 750 'watched' minutes in total (4% of total)	Plus 175 members of the YFOS bar
Total Audience			
7,252 total audience 3,195 total minutes of programming 378, 735 'watched' minutes in total Average audience watch time – 52 minutes			



Charles explained how the Facebook YFOS bar works: **“This year for the first time we created a group for our festival audience, YFOS BAR. This was a space where audience members could meet one another in a ‘Facebook Room’ after festival events. The real advantage to this is it shows a core audience who sign up specifically for the bar. Every time you post into the group, that audience member gets a notification. We can use the same bar for future years and build on the solid foundations of this group.”** By the end of the festival there were 175 members in the YFOS bar group.



Audience from the US, London, Scotland, and the Yorkshire Dales meeting in the YFOS Bar.

How does the festival compare to previous years?

Firstly, it is difficult to compare, as a digital festival is a very different project to an in-person, but it is important to think about overall numbers.

IN 2018 THE IN-PERSON FESTIVAL ATTRACTED 2,229 ATTENDANCES.
 IN 2020 THE DIGITAL FESTIVAL ATTRACTED 7,252 ATTENDANCES.
 THAT'S MORE THAN A THREEFOLD INCREASE!

THE CHALLENGE OF A WHOLLY DIGITAL FESTIVAL

It is important at this point to stress how hard it was to transition from a live people-facing festival to a wholly digital experience, for the team at least. Artists had mixed reactions, which are explored in part two. Audiences transitioned well, which is explored in part three.

The decision to go digital was a direct response to Covid-19 and very much done on a ‘needs must’ basis. Many other festivals and events were cancelled, but Settle Stories did not - instead they rose to the challenge. Charles explained he was **“Very proud of what we did. We had to undo a huge amount of work that had been done for a live festival and we managed to pull it off as a digital festival.”**

Charles and Sita both mentioned how difficult it was before the festival began, they didn't know what they didn't know. It was also clear that there was a lot of pressure on the team in many different ways. They had to:

- Deal with connection issues – sometimes live and under pressure, while remaining calm
- Deal with huge amounts of stress
- Manage emotions across staff, artists, and volunteers during an international crisis
- Make use of substandard equipment – home computers and web cams; IT equipment had to be adapted and was not always of a professional standard
- Find, choose, use and teach new technology to artists and audiences
- Programme, market, finance, and run a wholly different programme with a very limited amount of time to adapt

So much has been learned in such a short space of time that can be built upon in the future, yet there remains more learning to be done, as well as significant challenges to overcome. There are still areas of improvement open for discussion and more ideas in development. Charles said, **“I learnt a lot and going digital again would be easier as we've done it once - it would seem a real shame not to as so much learning has taken place and I want to build on these skills.”**

The audience this year were chatty and happy to discuss in detail what they thought of the festival. One audience member shared some in-depth thoughts...

“Mainly that I loved every minute of the events I attended, without exception. And I'm astounded that you managed to pull off transitioning to an entirely digital event so successfully. Also, it was terrific being able to meet others in the YFOS Bar afterwards. It's put Settle on the map for me (though I'm already very fond of parts of Yorkshire that I know), and unlikely as it is that I'll ever actually be there in person at the right time, I would love to attend some live events. Not about the festival, but a comment about the platform and tech challenges as I experienced them: it took me a little while to get accustomed to the Crowdcast platform (only because other platforms tend to shape one's expectations of how others behave in terms of interactivity), but the main difficulty I had was figuring out how to cast my iPad screen to my TV, as this is something which the Crowdcast (ironically! Haha, ok, different type of casting) platform doesn't automatically facilitate - in comparison, say, to something like Facebook - i.e. casting to another device (e.g. TV) via Chromecast. This was actually a fairly crucial thing for me to get right, as I've found I don't enjoy watching online events on a small screen (laptop or tablet), and also I couldn't watch the events with my partner unless I could cast to our TV. Got it working in the end, but it was tedious, required lots of Googling and figuring out how different entities use the term cast, and I had to subscribe to a third-party app to make it possible. Other than that challenge, I did like the platform and the way it allowed for questions to be voted for to determine which ones should be put to the artist(s). Many thanks to you the organisers, and the artists, for all your hard work and being a ray of sunshine during lockdown life!”

One other said **“Very impressed by the variety and quality of the events and by the superb presentation and your confident ways of dealing with unfamiliar technical issues. I am very proud of you all.”**

There were some technical issues throughout, there is no way to avoid this and this is in no way a criticism of Settle Stories, more a statement of fact. One audience member told us, **"I thoroughly enjoyed the event I attended but it was marred slightly through technical issues which meant the feed lost sound and froze from time to time. I refreshed, but to no avail."** And another said, **"Maybe some technical advice as to how to improve the viewing. I lost quite a bit of content due to buffering and only spotted a solution part-way through."**

"Very variable quality, but worthwhile. I forwarded the programme to a relative at a distance and we enjoyed discussing and comparing our experiences, so this became a social event despite lockdown"

Audience

As with all new technology, it might be an idea to create some simple 'how-to' guides in advance of a future festival, for getting the best out of each platform used, for registering, and for advice on how to deal with an 'iffy' WiFi connection.

"The technical quality was really good although I did have problems tuning in to Jan Blake's event as I'd saved a space but didn't get any

"I've watched a lot of online storytelling since the start of lockdown, some good and some not so great, but the Settle festival has been absolutely world class, both in terms of the quality of the sessions and the efficiency of organisation and presentation - a huge well done to everyone involved! 😊"

Audience

instructions from Crowdcast on how to join in the event. Managed to figure it out but this might have been confusing for non tech-savvy people. Overall, really enjoyed it and thought the organisation and use of technology was great 😊" while another audience member explained, **"It was so good to have the 'watch again' option because on many occasions due to poor WiFi we could not watch Live performances".**

"The technical, level was generally poor. This might be good enough for a generally uncritical "storytelling" clientele but is not adequate to reach out to a new audience. You have top-level performers but not many were able to show themselves well online. This does not present our art form well."

Audience

Evidently the technical fixes provided did work for people. One audience member explained, **"Thank you for the prompt clear response to buffering, screen freeze, reducing resolution, etc."** another told us, **"I felt really well supported whilst watching A Owen on Monday evening. My IT problems were quickly addressed and the whole experience was fantastic. Will watch more next year."**

"Loved it - the personal touch and friendliness of Sita and Charles, encouraging a community to form in the 'chat'. Celebrating where we are - balloons and cats and dogs and clearly at home and not just in front of a blank wall. Great mix of events, inter-generational feel to the whole thing. Company for a whole month of the six in isolation. Thank you!"

Audience

The sense of community was an important part of the whole festival experience. Each performer had balloons in the back of their shot somewhere, and this was a really simple way of linking the whole festival - to creating a brand. **“Luckily the balloons helped!”**, explained Sita as technical issues were discussed.



Family audiences sent images of getting dressed up & their craft creations made during workshops.

CREATED A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Part of the reasons for success are clearly that a sense of community was created, despite the added challenge of that being a digital community. Speaking after the festival, Charles explained that he **“Loved that we were able to reach more people... originally I’d felt unsure about going digital because of not being able to engage with the festival audience. However, as the event went on, we really built a strong online community. We got to know festival regulars, we built a Facebook group ‘YFOS Bar’ that 175 people joined, we met people in the bar after events and people sent in pictures of what they had created (specifically kids’ events) so I got a real buzz from this.”**



“I enjoyed interacting with the other participants as much as I did listening to the talk. The software worked well for building a feeling of community which made the experience richer.”



Audience



“I’m looking forward to the next one! It made me feel like I was actually a ‘part’ of the literary & story telling world instead of just a ‘reader of books’, if that makes sense. :)”



Audience

One person explained, **"It was a very open, inclusive atmosphere. I liked that."**

This strength of feeling was evident from the audience comments. Not everyone knew how to describe it; some talked about community and some about tone. It was clear that they enjoyed taking part (note the taking part, not just 'watching.')

One person explained, **"A real opportunity to see/be part of such an interesting festival. Absolutely loved it. Sita and Charles were brilliant. A very big thank you, YFOS. I hope I get the chance to be part of this next year too."** And another: **"I was impressed by the generous humour of the organisers who worked together as welcoming hosts and as a team, and how very well organised it was."**

Sita explained, the fact that she and Charles introduced each event **"meant we had an identity."** More than one person even called it 'magical'. On top of the challenges of working during a pandemic, and changing everything they had previously planned, the programming remained high quality and artistically challenging. Settle Stories did not take the easy option here. It is also clear that the aim of a high-quality arts festival was met.

The decision to take the festival online paid off, as they matched the mood of a nation.

A significant part of the success was down to the personal dedication of Sita and Charles and that they became the faces of the festival, introducing events, hosting the festival bar, running a festival Living Room each week and facilitating Q&A's with artists. They were a key and visible part of the programme. People got to know 'Charles' and 'Sita' as they built the environment and the community.

"On the magical side of Lockdown – thank you!"

Audience

"Stunning. Not only was the storytelling entrancing, the sense of community and being welcomed—even across screens-- and the ability to participate in life-changing, delicious conversations and workshops was magical."

Audience

"I was very grateful for some of the artistically adventurous programming"

Audience

"Signed up for Hay, Ledbury and Edinburgh and YFOS by far the best loved the friendliness and Sita and Charles were the best presenters ever loved the way they reacted with the storytellers"

Audience

COVID-19 AND TIMING

Taking place in August, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, impacted people in profound ways. Events and much social interaction had been cancelled for the past 5 months and people's spirits were low. Appreciation of this event was clear and evident, as one person said, **"Wonderful, learnt so much. These events have made a huge positive difference to this year"** and another: **"Was such a joy as I love the arts, and allowed me to meet people around the world. It really lifted my spirits and gave me hope, thank you for everyone's hard work to put this together!!!"**

It has been well documented how the pandemic has directly and adversely affected mental health, yet to hear from audience members quite how much the festival helped them during such difficult times is heart-warming and hugely impactful, please note the use of capitals as one person underlines their strength of feeling: **"WELL DONE TO EVERYONE INVOLVED IN ORGANISING SUCH A BRILLIANT FESTIVAL. I REALLY ENJOYED IT AND IT HAS HELPED MY MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING DURING COVID19"**

66

"I've been struggling to find artistic community, and also to enhance my practice to withstand the deep depression and PTSD that have been haunting me since a family member's suicide. YFOS helped me feel I had a home in the art and storytelling world again, and in the workshops and conversations I learned techniques to overcome struggles that have been with me a long, long time. Thank you."

Audience

More so than ever, people were actively seeking ways to boost their morale. Restrictions on daily life can lead to feelings of boredom and monotony. The festival succeeded in presenting a broad and diverse programme, as well as a

social aspect with the mixing of audience and artists that created an increased appreciation of the event.

The joy it brought was significant. As one audience member told us, **"I loved the festival - I am still shielding and this cheered me up and brought interest, variety and wonder into our home"**, and another, **"I was feeling quite downcast in late July and early August and the Festival gave me something to look forward to - a reason to keep going through the day, knowing there would be something stimulating, challenging, entertaining in the evening. The mixture of events was**

excellent, and I enjoyed and appreciated the way Charles and Sita handled the introductions and the Q&A sessions after all the speakers."




Audiences streaming events in their gardens



Out of the 56 artists taking part, 21 completed the online (anonymous) survey. At the time of the decision being made to take the festival digital and not cancel, the whole world and the UK in particular was faced with many difficult choices. Artists, creatives, and freelancers were facing a frightening cliff as their income and opportunities to earn vanished, and although the UK government introduced the 'furlough' scheme to protect employed income, this was not the case for the self-employed. The chancellor introduced the SEISS grant on 13th May 2020 and there was some security for some of the artists involved. At the time of the decision though, the arts world was in crisis as cancellation after cancellation swiftly followed, but people still had bills to pay.

“Creative freelancers need a much better deal from the digital economy, which made it practically impossible to make a living as a creative before the pandemic, never mind during it.” - A&J Evans, Collective Resilience, 2020.


This situation was a key part of Settle Stories rationale for not cancelling. Charles explained that they **“built a lot of goodwill I hope with artists who we stuck by and supported”**




How has your work as an artist been affected by Covid-19?

Artist taking part

"Hugely.
A whole series of performances and events I had lined up for the summer were cancelled, and as yet they show no sign of returning. I'm trying to line up work and opportunities for 2021, but the lack of certainty is very unnerving."






How has your work as an artist been affected by Covid-19?

Artist taking part

"Books I was contracted to deliver were pushed back. One of them is unlikely to happen at all. Other projects are also unlikely to happen now."





How has your work as an artist been affected by Covid-19?

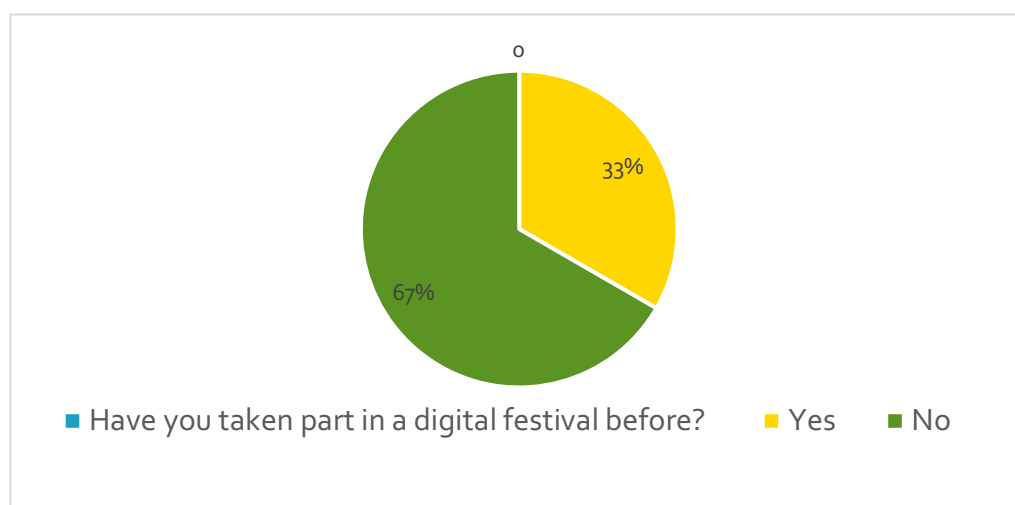
Artist taking part

"Massively.
My work is seasonal and event based so I have lost a season of work and faced a lot of cancellations. I am still unsure about when my work will return with the closure of theatres and event venues. I am very grateful to have Settle Stories throughout lockdown as it allowed me to continue my work."



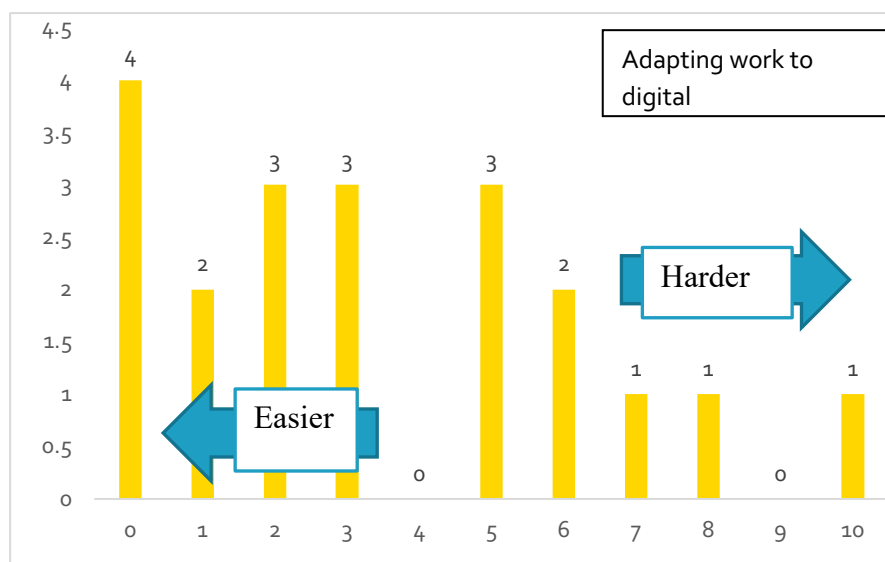
“...as spring turns into summer, we’re beginning to understand more clearly the depth of Covid-19’s impact on our lives and our economy, and to recognise that the end is not yet in sight. It’s sadly inevitable, at this point, that many businesses in many sectors will be unable to weather such a fierce and lengthy storm.” - Darren Henley, CEO, Arts Council England

This was, quite frankly a time of crisis for the whole of the arts world. It can’t go unsaid how much we at The Evaluator also appreciated the decision not to cancel; as an evaluation firm and small business that works with arts organisations and charities, and evaluates a number of festivals, we also saw work and opportunities vanish. It is important at this point to appreciate and not to underestimate the scale of the issue: Settle Stories bucked the trend.



We asked artists if they had taken part in a digital festival before? Only 33% said yes.

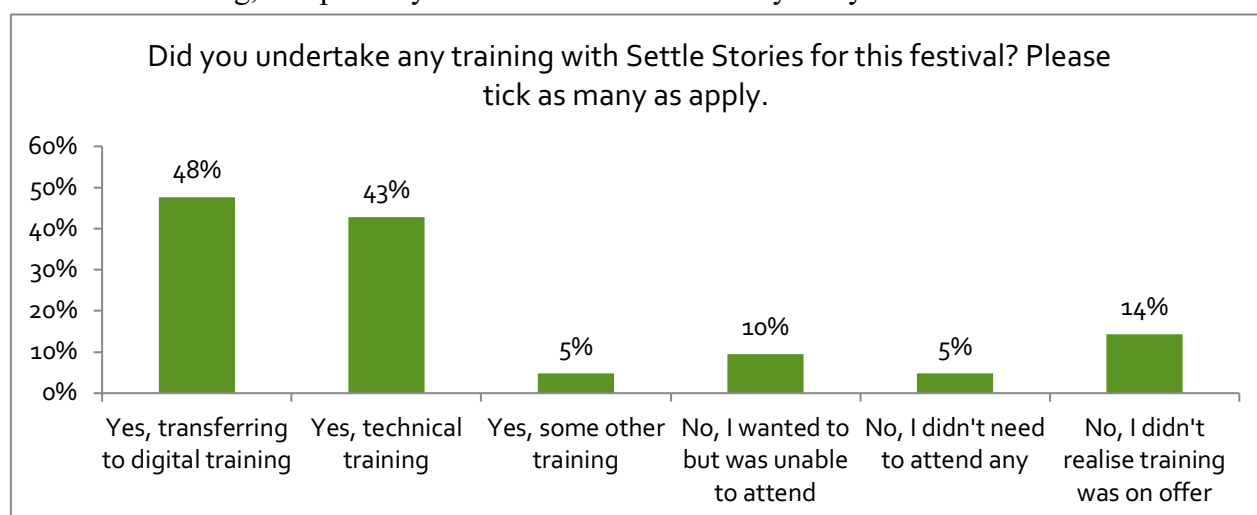
Settle Stories did not merely just pivot to digital. They diligently worked with all their artists, but more so with the new-to-digital two-thirds providing them with free training to rework their content for online delivery with professional filmmaker and established TV actor Ray Emmet Brown.



We asked artists if they would class themselves as emerging or established artists. In 2020, 24% described themselves as emerging and 76% as established.

We also asked about how easy it was for artists to adapt and translate their work to digital, and in particular to a digital festival. The exact question we asked was, 'How easy was it to adapt your

work to a digital festival?' Artists could choose an answer between 0 and 10, where 0 was very easy and 10 was very difficult. In total 4 people found it very easy and only 1 found it very difficult. On the whole people found it easier than we had expected, but this could be because Settle Stories had provided the training, and possibly taken some of the difficulty away.



What benefit do you get as an artist for taking part in the festival?

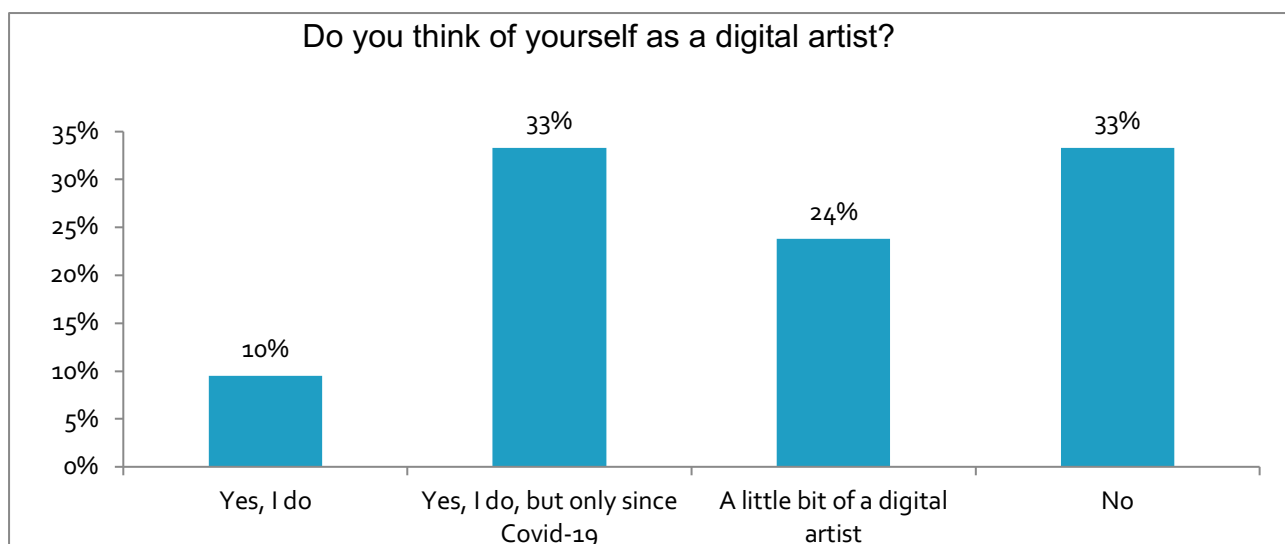
Artist taking part

"It developed my skills, by moving to digital it allowed me to reach a larger audience. I've also been able to create something with longevity - as it is now online, it is recorded and permanent. I've made new contacts and it has helped to also feel validated as an artist - by being part of a great festival"

People who took up the 'transferring to digital' training had an average score of 3.6 and people who didn't take this up had an average score of 3.4, so actually it is likely that artists who had the most challenges to their work being presented digitally, spent time adapting it. Overall established artists

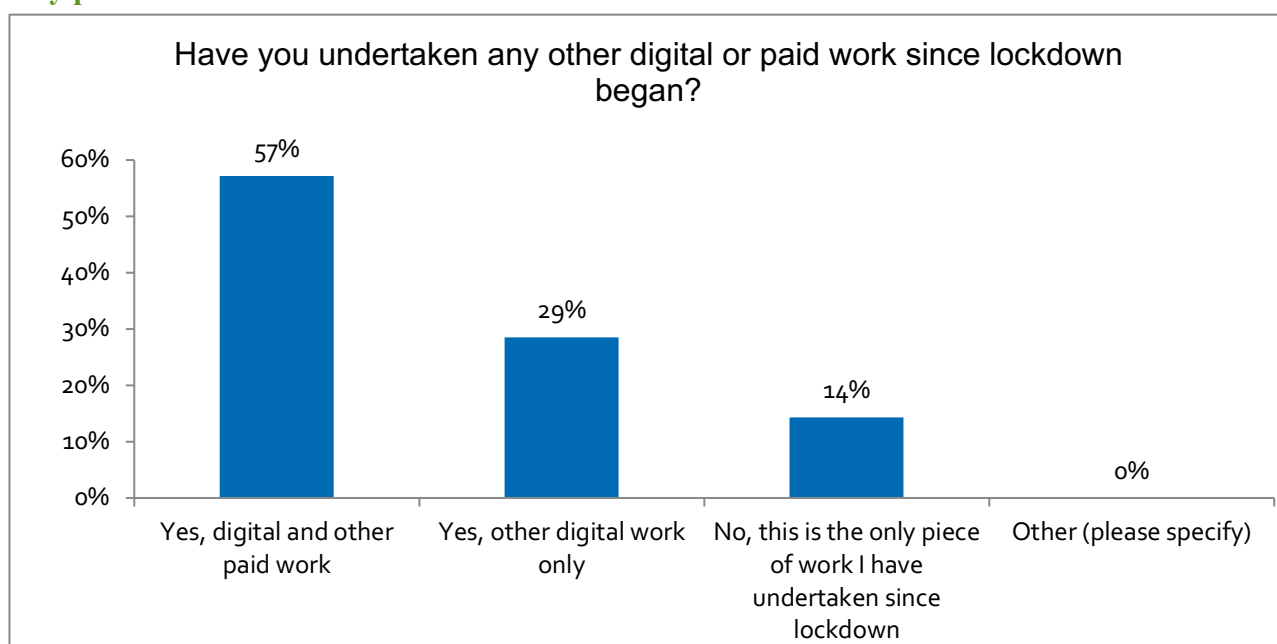
found it slightly harder to adapt their work (an average score of 3.8) than emerging artists (an average score of 3.2).

It is possible that this data is slightly skewed as a few artists dropped out and decided not to learn how to go digital or take advantage of the training. One artist took part in the training and then decided it was too difficult to adapt their work. All of those that pulled out were established artists who were not reliant on the festival income. It should be noted that Settle Stories offered to honour 100% of the verbal contracts made with freelance artists and paid them at the contract value originally agreed for appearing at the live festival. 95% of artists took up the work.



The training had an impact: more than half of all the artists now consider themselves a digital artist – whether that is a little bit or only since Covid-19. Only one third of the artists involved in the YFOS do not consider themselves digital artists.

Settle Stories was not the only saviour providing artists with work, but for 14% of the artists involved in this festival it was a literal lifeline as they agreed with the statement: **“No, this is the only piece of work I have undertaken since lockdown”**.

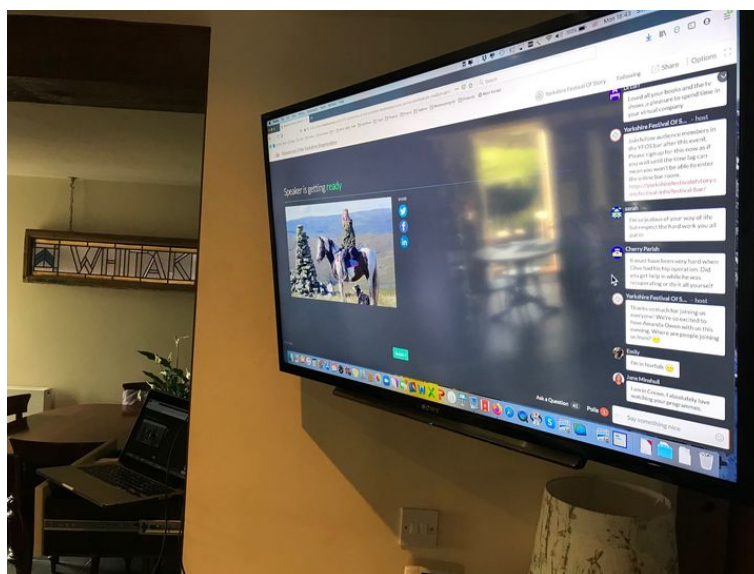


This evaluation was carried out during August and September 2020, and this means a long and dry season of almost six months with no work for some of the artists involved. This impact should not be under-estimated.

In previous festival evaluations we have used the Arts Council Quality metrics as a way to understand the artistic quality of the festival. This requires asking both artists and audiences. The metrics are worked out by asking artists to agree or disagree with statements. The numbers of those agreeing, unsure or disagreeing have been translated into numerical measures which can be compared. (Each agree or strongly agree scores a 1, each don't know scores 0.5 and each disagree or strongly disagree scores 0 – this total score is then divided by the total number of answers to give an answer which has a maximum score of 1.00 which is extremely positive).

Metric	Previous Score 2018	Artists Score 2020
Rigour: It was well thought through and put together	1.00	1.00
Critical: It is important this digital work is happening during Covid-19	n/a	1.00
Distinctiveness: It was different from things I've experienced before	0.92	0.88
Relevance: It has something to say about the world in which we live	0.88	0.98
Skills: I gained new skills	0.7	0.98

The Critical Metric was newly written for the festival to see if people agreed with the internal team thoughts that it was vital the festival went ahead in a digital way. 100% of artists strongly agreed with this statement. We can compare this with the previous festival results and it is clear that Settle Stories have maintained their rigour, have only slightly lost on distinctiveness and significantly improved on both relevance and skills scores. This is impressive work considering there was a dramatic change from in-person to digital. It is also a crucial aim, as artists certainly learned more skills from this digital festival.



Festival event being streamed into an audiences home



What benefit do you get as an artist for taking part in the festival?

Artist
taking
part

"People from around the world who would never have attended Settle Stories in person have now seen me perform and it'll have reached a far wider audience. Doing it digitally was also an interesting new experience."



What benefit do you get as an artist for taking part in the festival?

Artist
taking
part

"It was a joy to be able to reach audiences in Yorkshire, across the UK and beyond! I also tend to have small audiences because of the intimacy of my shows, so being able to 'perform' for larger numbers online was a treat! It was a wonderful creative challenge to figure out how to record my show for online broadcast."



What benefit do you get as an artist for taking part in the festival?

Artist
taking
part

"The enjoyment of doing. The promotion of my work. The chance to work with folk I like and if there's a few bob in it then that's a bonus. Plus the Festival was organised and presented by such nice people."



What benefit do you get as an artist for taking part in the festival?

Artist
taking
part

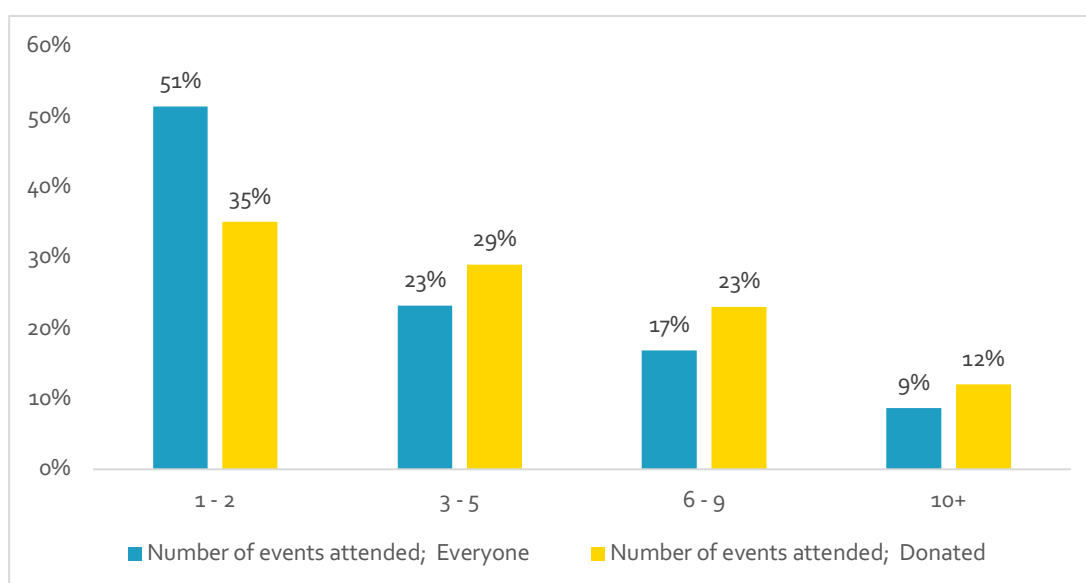
"Above all, a valuable sense of connection with other artists, organisers and audiences."



PART THREE: THE AUDIENCE

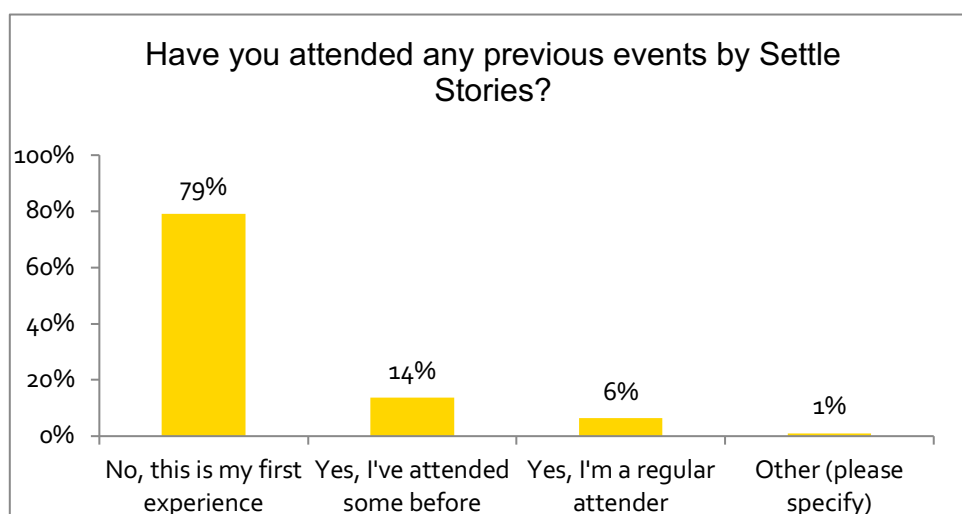
In total, 224 people responded to our online survey. This is out of a total number of attendees of 7,272, although some of those attendees are likely to be the same people attending more than once. On average, people attended 3.9 events, which means a total audience of 1,864 individual people. The majority of the audience only attended 1 or 2 events. Just over a quarter attended six or more events. Those who attended more were more likely to donate to the festival.

Here we show the number of events attended as a whole (in blue), and then as a percentage split from those who donated (in yellow).

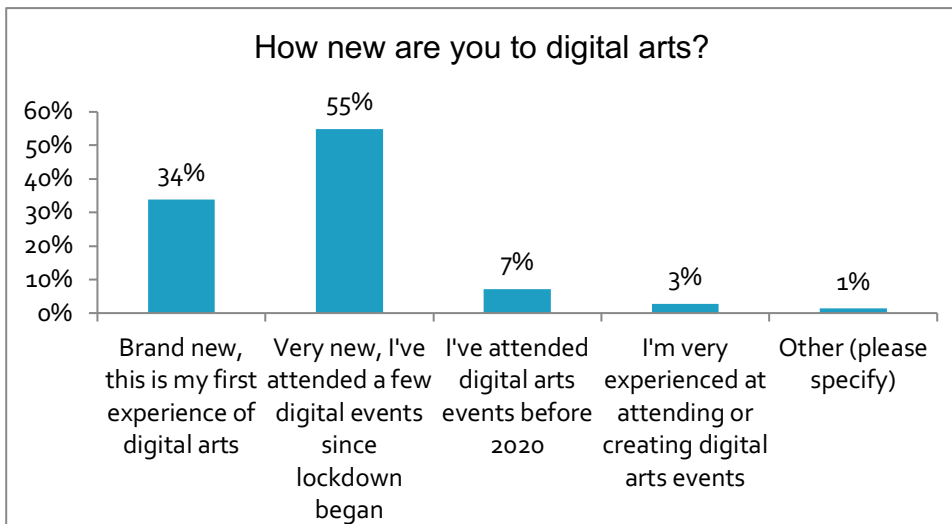


We asked people if they had ever attended a 'digital festival of arts' before, and only 24% of people said yes. The vast majority - 76% - were new to digital arts.

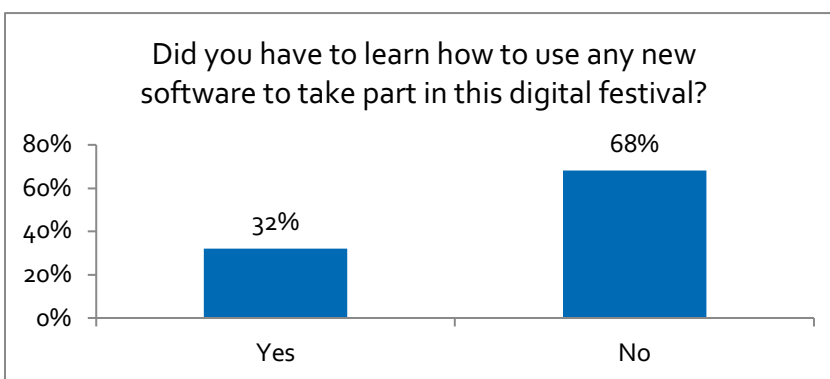
Some people were also new to Settle Stories. Taking the festival both digital and worldwide opened up a new audience. 79% of people met Settle Stories during this experience. One person explained, **"I live in Canada. This is my first Settle Stories digital experience".**



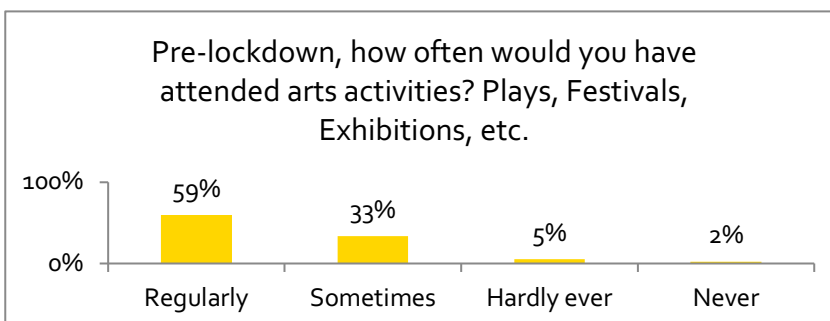
Some people were also new to digital arts. Almost 90% had only experienced digital arts activities since Covid-19 and lockdown began, and 34% of people were brand new - having their first digital arts experience with the YFOS itself. There was some confusion here, one



audience member said:
“I'm not really sure what you mean by digital arts. Are you talking just about festivals or are you talking about accessing the arts on-line - e.g. National Theatre, Opera North during lockdown?”
 Although another said **“Only since Lockdown, but a lot of events since then”.**



One of the interesting points to consider is that many people were new to arts digitally, but not new to the software of Zoom, Crowdcast and YouTube. Is that because YFOS took place in August, six months after most people had had to learn new technology in quite a rapid way? Or is it because people are already familiar with using these platforms for work and socialising, and just hadn't yet used them for art?



Overall, this was an established arts audience; it was new to digital and new to Settle Stories, but fairly used to engaging with the arts.

FUNDRAISING

Settle Stories made huge changes to their fundraising strategy to respond to the new digital programme in 2020 and it really worked.

Changing to digital, with little notice as they did, meant a loss of planned income in the form of ticket sales and sponsorship. Charles explained, **“lots of work on the new website couldn't be utilised because we went digital and had to use Crowdcast as an external booking system. This meant we could not ask for donations as part of our ticket registration flow, instead we had to use PayPal.”** Recovering from these challenges, they originally set themselves an ambitious target to raise £10,000. Charles tells the story of what happened next...

“We started by making improvements to the Settle Stories and festival websites to increase email list growth and donor acquisition opportunities ahead of the event. Our focus in the lead-up to the festival was on **marketing and promotion of the festival**. This was based on the (confirmed) assumption that our primary opportunity to acquire donors would be via **festival attendees**. We focused on social media engagement by creating dynamic moving-image content.

The second step in our fundraising strategy was to **convert as many event registrations into donations as possible!** We added a donation ask to the Crowdcast **event registration confirmation page**. Due to the limitations of booking on Crowdcast and not being able to implement a donation ask into the registration flow we focused our efforts into asking people for donations during events. Festival attendees were asked to make a donation at the **beginning and end of every festival event**, via the donation button which was integrated into the Crowdcast platform. Mid-way through the festival, we issued local and **regional press releases** and we began asking supporters for donations via **email marketing**, and via **social media**. Staff and board members ran their own **fundraisers (mostly using Facebook)** which alone generated **over £2,000 in revenue**.

We reached the £10,000 target before the end of the festival and promptly introduced a **stretch goal of £5,000 to cover lost revenue from festival sponsorship that was pulled when the pandemic hit**.

Closing in on the end of the festival, at the headline event with the Yorkshire Shepherdess (the festival’s best-attended event), we drilled home **the urgency of the impending deadline with live updates to our audience of how much we had raised throughout the event** and the need for donations before the festival closed. Moments after the event finished, **we surpassed our £15,000 fundraising target.”**

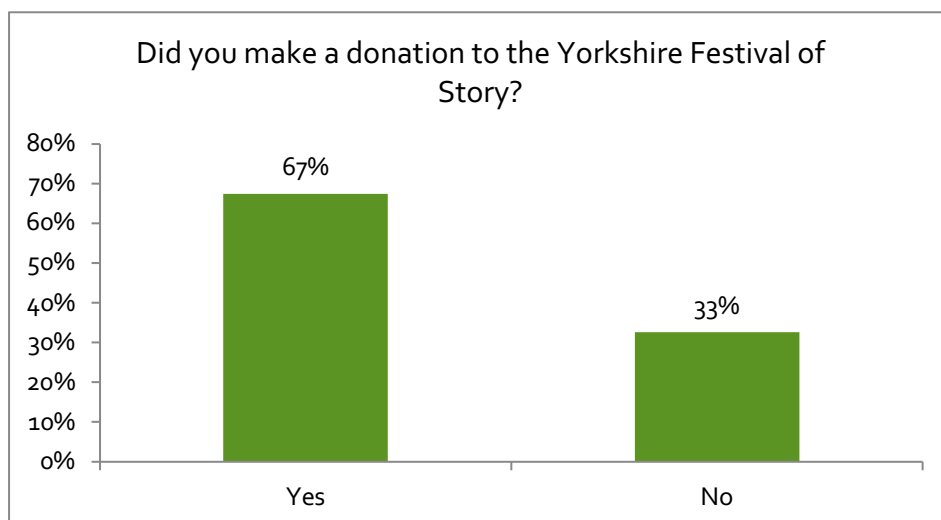
Raising over £15,000 is a huge achievement and Settle Stories should feel incredibly proud of themselves. They worked with a fundraising consultant, and having that constant support really helped to keep them focussed and on track.

'Charles and Sita would like to say a huge thank you to Miriam Wilson, fundraising consultant who supported YFOS pro bono.'

The £15,000 reached was made up of 877 individual donations, some raised through board member appeals and some through general campaigns, but the vast majority (750 of the 877 or 86%) came through donations from the audience in lieu of tickets purchased. A further 12% came along through the hard work and personal connections of the staff and trustees. Interestingly, this makes an average donation of £17.10 per person. Growing the size of the individual donations to £20 (on average) may be a good achievable target for the future.

It was also clear that the audience really responded to the fundraising. One person said: **“I hope you smashed your £15,000 target.”** And, another audience member explained: **“It was fantastic and I really enjoyed having the opportunity to attend sessions. I was able to make a donation, but it was great that people of all financial means could attend.”** Another told us: **“Really enjoyed it. Donated twice. Tried to make a fair donation for number of events attended. Would be happy**

to pay a digital entrance fee or pay for a digital festival pass. Feel strongly those who can pay should and that arts and artists' work should be valued"



People seemed to feel they should donate, and donate proportionately for the number of events they attended. They recognised the importance of paying the artists. At the same time, it allowed people who wouldn't normally be able to attend the event due to financial constraints to access the programme. This suggests the overall tone of the message and the

call to donate didn't create negativity amongst the audience and was, therefore, just right. **"The only reason I didn't donate was that I couldn't; every other week during lockdown I've had no money whatsoever for anything"** and another said, **"apologies also - don't get paid till tomorrow!!"**

"My income means I afford one break away from home each year. I have considered the festival in the past and something else has taken priority. So, this digital venture has thrilled me, attending

13 events!! This has been precious, riveting, humorous, thought provoking. AWESOME!!!! 🥰💚🎵", from one audience member. And another said: **"Thank you for making it accessible for free."**

"Smart fundraising strategy. Good to hear about the support storytellers got to work with digital formats. Wonderful warm welcome to all events. Lovely personal approach, yet professional."

Audience

There were a couple of areas which need addressing, which is something the audience mentioned and Charles acknowledged this too. One audience member told us: **"donations were PayPal only which I don't use."** and another explained: **"Many of us in Singapore tried to donate but were unable to do so due to the system used. So a big thank you for the wonderful work."** Charles agreed that there were still ways to improve fundraising: **"I think we need to do some serious work on the donor - audience journey when booking tickets and making donations for the future - we need to make it easy, build our mailing list and increase donations"**

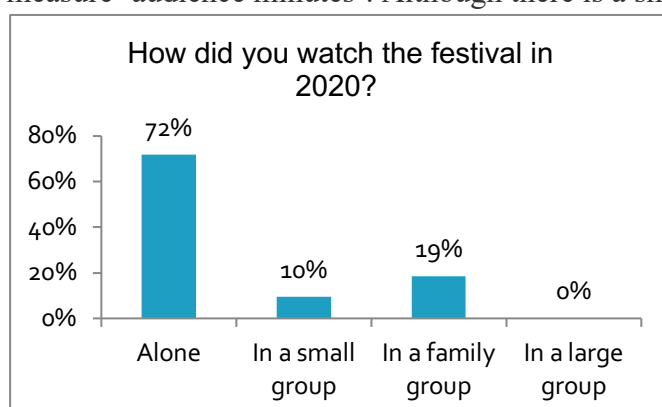
Also, replicating the success of 2020 may be challenging for a number of reasons. We don't yet know the depth of the economic implications arising from the pandemic. This year has been very far from a normal year, and charities have experienced growth in donations and generosity across the board.

“Charity donations have been surging in the US with 28% higher donations than a year earlier. In the UK, the figures have been even more striking, with online donations in April 2020 304% higher than the previous year” - A&J Evans, Collective Resilience, 2020

As a donation model achieved higher financial return than a ticketed model at all previous Settle Stories festivals whilst increasing access to audiences, replicating this donation model should be considered for future festivals.

FAMILY AUDIENCES

The family audience at YFOS made up 42% of the total audience, but only watched 29% of our core measure ‘audience minutes’. Although there is a small core of dedicated families who love Settle



Stories, they are not the major part of the audience, and not as committed or easy to reach.

The digital festival did change how people engaged with the festival. In 2018, audiences attended the live festival as follows - around 25% of people attended alone, with 36% attending as a small group of adults and another 36% as a family group. A small number of people, just 3%, attended in a large group. In 2020, Covid-19 restrictions meant

that large groups were not permitted, so there is no surprise that this is now 0%.

Family audiences have reduced quite dramatically from Settle Stories previous festivals. Possibly a digital festival is just not the right vehicle for family audiences; not all children engage with digital programming. Children may also have lots of other distractions at home: toys, siblings, gardens, other digital ways of ‘playing’, and may not have been able to maintain concentration as easily on digital devices.

Those audience members who did attend as a family really did value the programme though; it might be worth retaining a small family element to the digital programme on offer.



"It raised our spirits, brought us together as a family, introduced me to new ideas and art forms. It made the world smaller and made it easier to cope with a stressful situation. It is the only online festival or event I have been to that has genuinely felt like a festival. It drew me in And I wanted to come back for more. The only problem was there was so much good stuff it made August very busy!"



Audience



"I was unable to attend as much as I would like due to other commitments. I hadn't spotted that I could watch the headline act for 24 hours after the event until later! I attended 2 live events and a few recorded events alone but I was also able to watch several recorded events with my daughter, aged six, who kept asking for more. It was brilliant to see such a wide range of brilliant quality events for all ages. I would likely not have been able to attend the Festival if it was all live so I am grateful that COVID has led to some positive happenings! Huge well done to everyone involved in bringing this together :)"



Audience

AUDIENCE QUALITY METRICS

In previous festival evaluations we have used Arts Council England's Quality Metrics to understand the artistic quality of the festival. These metrics are worked out by asking audiences to agree or disagree with statements. The numbers of those agreeing, unsure or disagreeing have been translated into numerical measures which can be compared. (Each agree or strongly agree scores a 1, each don't know scores 0.5 and each disagree or strongly disagree scores 0 – this total score is then divided by the total number of answers to give an answer which has a maximum score of 1.00 which is extremely positive.)

Metric	Previous Score 2018	Audience Score 2020
Enthusiasm: I would come to something like this again	0.98	0.98
Captivation: It was absorbing and held my attention	0.98	0.98
Rigour: It was well thought through and put together	0.98	0.97
Critical: It is important this digital work is happening during Covid-19	n/a	1.00
Distinctiveness: It was different from things I've experienced before	0.91	0.90
Relevance: It has something to say about the world in which we live	0.95	0.95

Incredibly, despite changing to a digital festival, Settle Stories has maintained its excellent quality, as shown by the metrics. In 2018 it outperformed all the average UK benchmarks available, and in 2020 it maintained this excellent track record despite being a digital festival. 100% of the audience agreed with our new metric, that the festival was critical and that it was 'important that this digital work was happening during Covid-19'.

People, on average, rated the festival a near perfect 4.6 stars out of 5. 70% of the audience gave the festival an actual perfect score.



MARKETING

Marketing was very different from usual this year. People were at home and asked by the government to stay at home for most of the lead-up to the festival. Diaries were empty but the festival in August coincided with good weather, with the chance to meet up with people after months of not being allowed. In addition, August was a month where we were asked to ‘eat out to help out’ and the government subsidised the food and drink industry on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. Sita and Charles were concerned this would have an implication on audience numbers.



**YORKSHIRE
FESTIVAL
OF STORY**

The rebrand has been a huge success, raising the ambition and the concept of the festival. Charles explained, **“I’m really pleased with the Yorkshire Festival of Story brand and think we’ve built very strong foundations for the future.”**

Marketing tends to be criticised in most of the evaluations we complete with an audience; no one ever thinks anything has been advertised enough, regardless of the fact they found out and attended. One audience member said: **“please advertise more”**, and another, **“not sure where it was advertised, but if my daughter in law hadn’t mentioned it, I wouldn’t have known about it.”** Another explained, **“wish I had known about it sooner and not missed the first two weeks. Needed more publicity.”** With a similar comment from another member of the audience: **“heard about it rather late to plan involvement. Wish it had wider and earlier BBC radio publicity”**.

WHERE DID PEOPLE HEAR ABOUT THE FESTIVAL?

We ran a word frequency analysis on the comments people made when asked ‘How did you hear about the YFOS?’, and the results included: 39 Twitter/ 39 Facebook/ 24 friend/ 19 Amanda/ 13 social media/ 12 email/ 10 online and 10 Joanne Harris. Overall, it was mostly word of mouth through people: friend/ colleague/ family/ daughter/ granddaughter and so on. However, it was clear that the more well-known names really had an impact on marketing, both helping to spread the word and to attract people to attend.



“Wish I had known about it sooner as I only attended the last one, Amanda Owen as I saw it on twitter. She was ace!”



Audience

One audience member explained, **“Many congratulations to your team. What an amazing achievement. I stumbled across you and what a complete joy it was to stumble into. I particularly enjoyed Jan Blake, Jenni Murray and Amanda Owen. I would urge you to retain a digital component to the festival. You open joy to people who cannot come to events whether due to disability, lack of public transport, finances and many other reasons.”**

In 2018 59% of the audience were attending the festival for the first time. This means the marketing campaign and programme offer was enticing to new visitors. In 2020 as a digital festival, this increased to 79% which is a huge success.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

In 2014 the Facebook total reach was 10,000 in the month prior to the festival, in 2016 this reached just over 20,000 and grew to 45,000 in 2018. By 2020 the digital reach on Facebook was 188,900



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overall. It is worth exploring the total social media statistics for the month of the festival and some other key digital measures.

Facebook Statistics	Other Social Media/ Online Statistics	Key Points Noted
<p>August total reach on Facebook = 86,979</p> <p>August total comments, reactions, shares = 2,131</p> <p>August total post clicks = 2,691</p> <p>Members of the YFOS Bar = 175</p>	<p>Uses of hashtag #YFOS2020 = 187</p> <p>Total Instagram 'likes' = 2,937</p> <p>Twitter 'reach' for August = 99,760</p> <p>Unique visitors to website in August 2020 = 21,166</p> <p>Total web 'hits' in August 2020 = 3,149,786</p>	<p>In 2020, the YFOS event page on Facebook showed a huge jump. In 2016 this had 147 responses, this rose to 235 in 2018 and then more than doubled to 492 in 2020.</p> <p>Charles explained, "From analysing the engagement in August, I can see that the most popular posts were those promoting events with a Yorkshire emphasis (Ribblehead viaduct, Jenni Murray, Amanda Owen, Anne Bronte) and this helps us to understand what our audience is interested in."</p> <p>There was more of an appetite for traditional storytelling on Twitter with most engaged posts being about Traveller's Tales and again on the theme of Yorkshire with posts about Amanda Owen being very popular.</p> <p>The emphasis on creating video content across social media was a success and there was the addition of Jessica Harris, Sales and Communications Officer, who kept on top of social media during the festival.</p>
<p>Total Digital Reach: 3,339,869</p>		

The staff at Settle Stories have reflected on marketing and already identified areas to tweak and improve. Charles explained: **"We worked with a volunteer through Furlonteer.com who was a social media advertising manager in her day job. She supported a small (but our largest ever) social media advertising campaign mostly across Facebook. We spent a total of £321.98 and reached a further 42,698 people with 1,305 link clicks. Through various testing we identified a strong audience in the UK with interests such as storytelling, folklore, creative writing, and**

short stories. This highly engaged audience was female 50+ years old. Cost per result was 16p., We found the most popular posts were those with a strong emphasis on Yorkshire: Amanda Owen, Bronte's, etc. We experimented with several audiences. Surprisingly the same demographic in the USA was not receptive to our campaign. Our volunteer believes this could be because Yorkshire is not well known among these users. A future strategy to reach wider international audiences is to target expats."

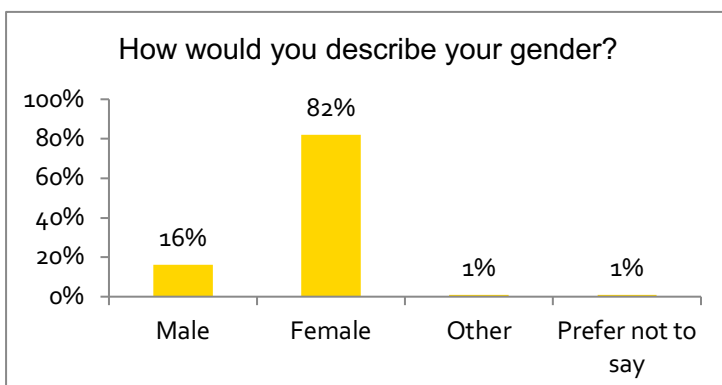
Charles acknowledges that marketing is always a moveable feast... **"We need to look at reaching wider digital audiences in the future - this was a totally new way of marketing for us - there is more we can do."**

Picture on left – Culture Vulture review on Instagram story

Mentioned you in their story



Demographics

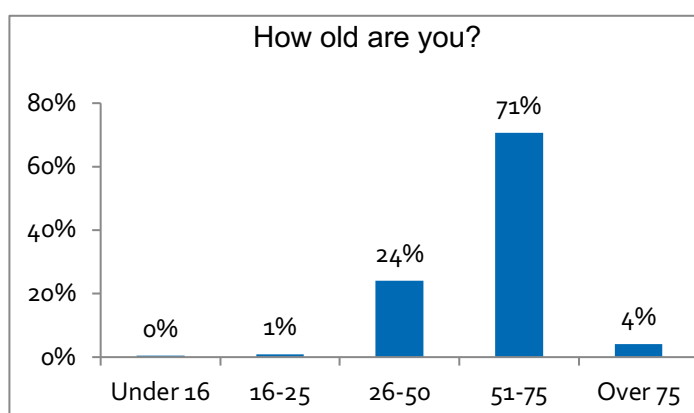


Gender

82% of the festival audience were female. In 2018 the festival also had a female bias, 68%. This has increased quite dramatically in 2020.

Age

There is a clear age range here. Most people, by far, are over 51 years old. In 2018, the age had a much wider spread, with 34% being aged 25-50 and 47% being aged 51-75.



Ethnicity

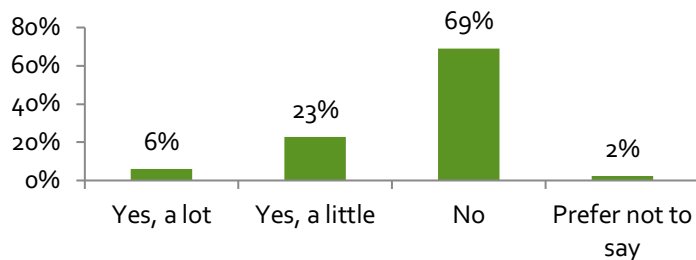
We asked people to self-describe their ethnicity – 77% used White/ British or White British and 22% were from more worldwide ethnicities including Chinese, European, Canadian, Asian, and many more. One person described themselves as a “Two Spirited Penguin” but they were the only one to use a non-standard description.

This is quite a change from 2018 where 90% of the audience described themselves as either White, White British, or British. This is reflective of a more multicultural audience.

Since Settle Stories inception in 2010 the organisation has worked to bring artists from around the world to work in Craven. Settle Stories believe this is important in terms of building community cohesion and introducing diversity in an otherwise homogenous area where 97.4% of the population are White British. The festival programme featured diverse stories from storytellers and artists from a range of cultures.

YFOS did achieve aim 4; and increased opportunity for Craven audiences to engage with those from different cultural backgrounds, particularly those from BAME communities.

Do you have a health condition or disability which prevents you from doing everything you would like to do?



Disability

One of the comments regularly made was that moving to a digital festival widened the audience to be much more inclusive and appealing for those with disabilities.

"Because of my hearing impairment I appreciated the closed captions on Rose's performance"

Audience

66

"Being online meant that I was able to attend in spite of being a carer - that would have made it challenging for me to attend in person. being online meant I was able to take in far more of the festival then I was able to do at a previous in person settle stories festival. Thank you for a brilliant festival."

66

Audience

66

"I loved the sessions I attended, mostly interviews with guest speakers, and appreciated the programme put together by the festival organisers I have very limited mobility (use a mobility scooter) so festivals are something I'm no longer able to attend because of challenges with travel, accommodation and access to buildings, plus I tire easily so am unable to guarantee I'll have the energy to attend). So digitally attending was sheer bliss and meant all the usual worries and challenges of attending disappeared."

66

Audience

66

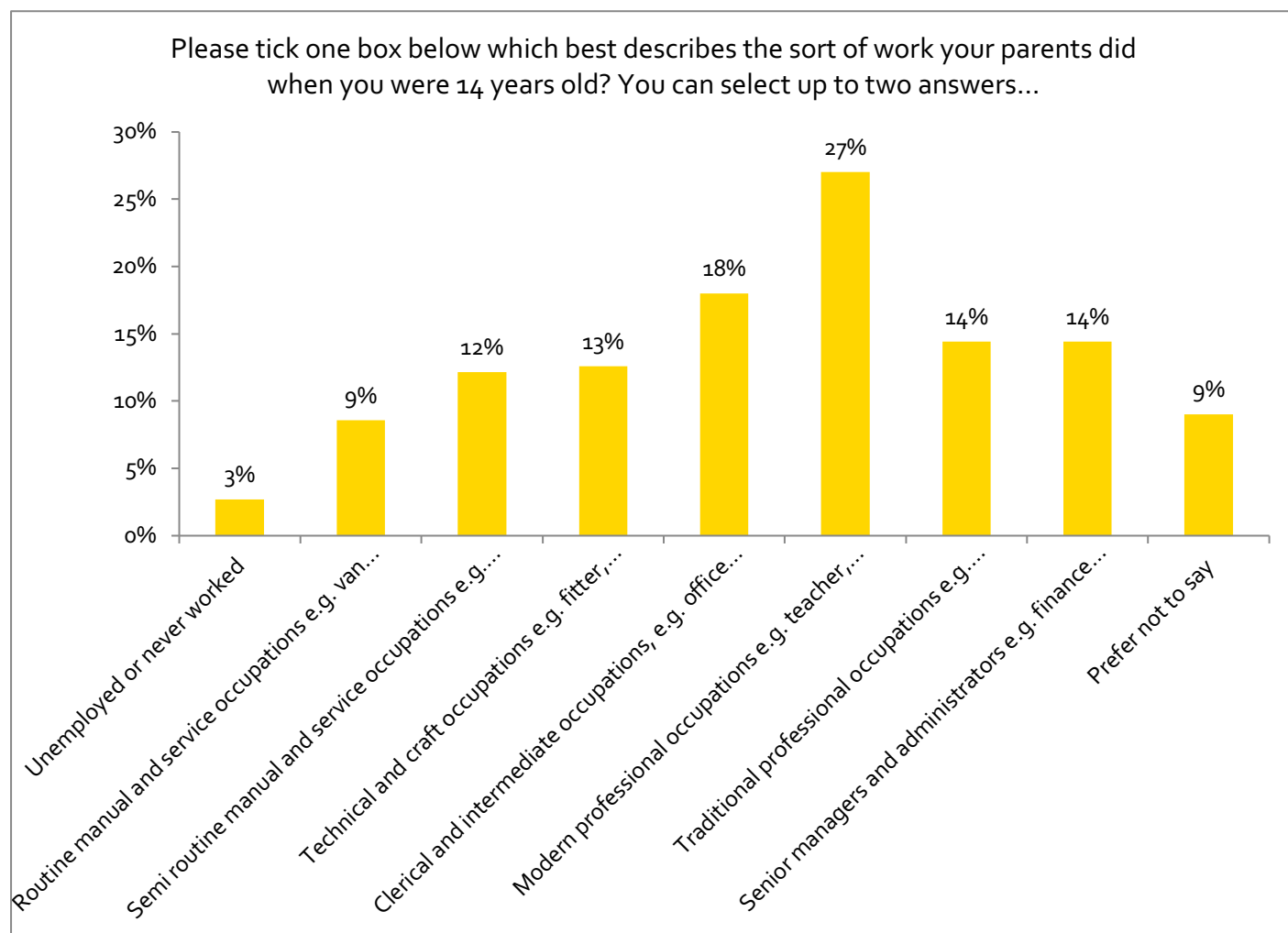
"Congratulations on getting your amazing Festival online so quickly for us all to enjoy. I'm sure those people with disabilities who usually find travelling hard, felt happy to experience it."

66

Audience

There was a huge impact on people with disabilities, which should not be under-estimated. Arts Council England is committed to diversity and with Black Lives Matter rising to prominence in 2020, disabilities may be in danger of receiving less attention and could be left behind. The effects of ‘Long Covid’ could also potentially increase the amount of people living with disabilities. Disabled women aged 51 and over would be a clear audience worth growing.

In 2020, we asked the audience about their parents’ jobs when they were growing up (the recommended question from Arts Council England to identify socio-economic background). There was a clear spread of backgrounds, representing a nicely mixed socio-economic audience.

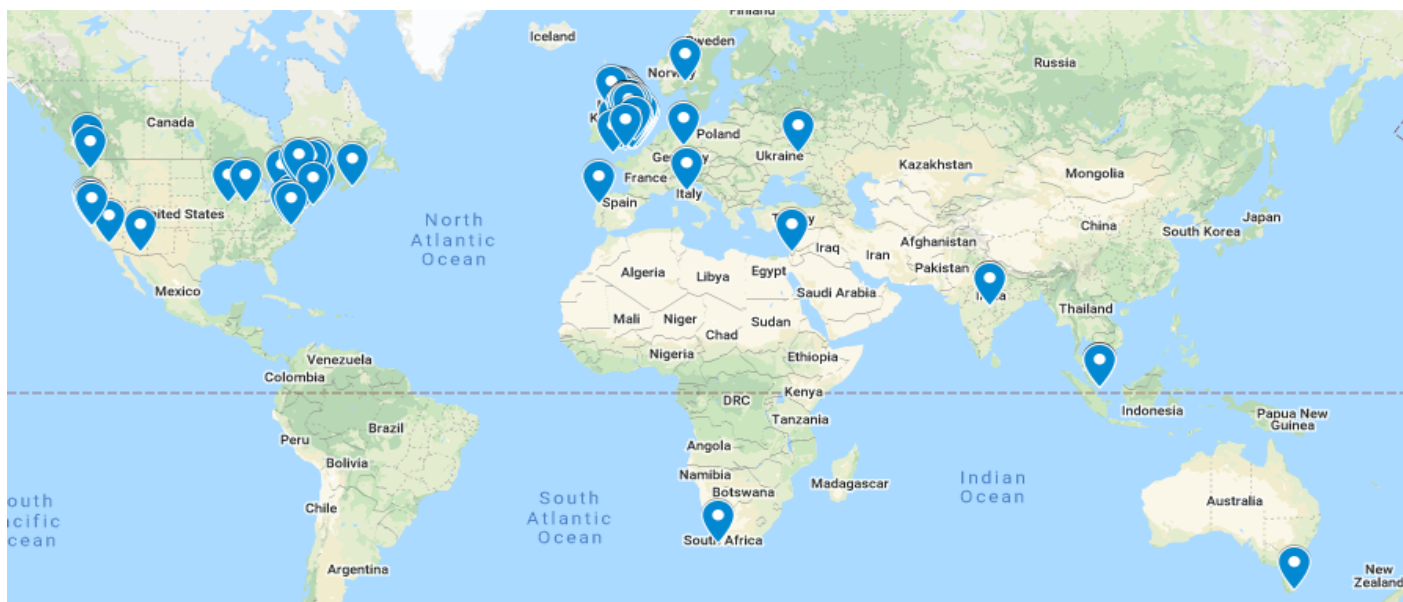


From left to right background options included:

- Unemployed or never worked
- Routine, manual or service occupations
- Semi-routine occupations
- Technical and craft occupations
- Clerical and intermediate occupations
- Modern professional occupations
- Traditional professional occupations
- Senior managers and administrators

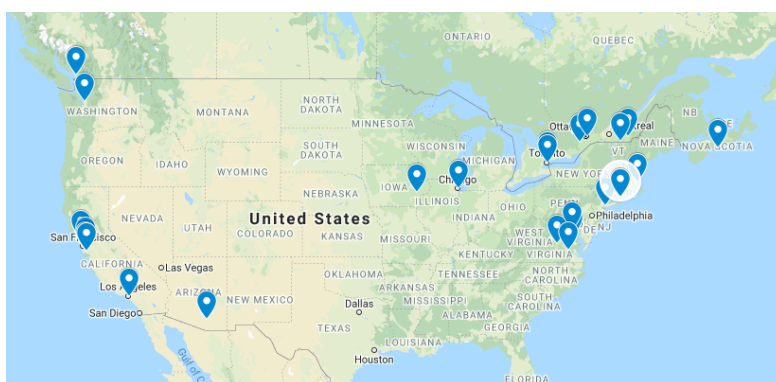
A WORLDWIDE AUDIENCE

The benefits of digital mean that the audience can be based anywhere. It was part of the YFOS tagline, ‘free, online, everywhere’ and the audience lived up to that. From Settle to South Africa, Seattle and Singapore, from Iowa to Illinois, Italy, Israel and India, from New York to Norway, from Australia to Arizona, and even places as far away as Vancouver, Quebec and Honolulu. The festival reached a world-wide audience.



One audience member explained: **“Loved the opportunity to attend from far away”** and another audience member told us, **“I’ve never attended a festival of this sort digitally before but am so grateful Settle Stories decided to go this route. As I live in the USA, I would never have been able to attend, indeed, probably would never have heard of it at all, had not I been able to access the presentations through my tablet. Well done!”**

By turning the festival into a digital event, it opened opportunities for people whether living outside the UK, or even those within the UK in areas too distant from Settle to attend without travel barriers. As two people told us: **“Great to be able to join from far away”** and, **“I loved being able to attend digitally, as I live in a rural area and travel is difficult for me. Digital events have enabled me to join things from which I was previously excluded”**



The largest audience outside the UK came from the USA with one audience member asking for the festival to continue its digital format going forward in order to allow her the pleasure of attending.

“The fact that I’m in the US informs my saying that I’d love for future festivals to be digital. The digital format loses much from live festivals but makes it possible for people who are at a geographic distance to attend. Same for people with limited means or mobility problems. Digital arts is one of the silver linings of the pandemic and I personally have been loving it. I

worry about whether the artists and organizations can make a go of it financially, but I will miss the access if it goes away. You folks did a stellar job. The programs were wonderful and the moderators were fantastic! I missed some programs that I would have attended due to having to evacuate from the Northern California wildfires but the ones I attended were wonderful! Thank you!”



“Brilliant festival that I probably wouldn’t have attended had it not been accessible remotely because of travel distances”

Time and financial constraints restrict ease and ability to travel, not to mention the current travel restrictions due to COVID-19. The fact that the festival presented in a digital format broke down these audience barriers and allowed more people to attend and enjoy all aspects of the programme.

In addition, there was a great spread across the UK. As the festival aimed to reach an audience across Yorkshire and further afield, it’s safe to say that goal was well and truly exceeded.

In 2020 we asked about the impact of coronavirus on our audience. People could choose a number on a scale of between 0 and 100 where 0 was positive and 100 was negative. The middle point with a score of 50 was labelled as ‘no impact or impact is mixed’. It was necessary to be sure we didn’t push people towards any particular answer. We recognised the importance of accounting for those people who enjoyed the time at home with family and less pressure in their lives. We also knew that others may have had traumatic experiences including loss and bereavement, economic crisis, or mental health issues. We expected to see a range of answers here.

In fact, five people scored the maximum 0, the most positive impact option available to them. A further 20 scored less than 30 which also put them on the ‘positive’ end of the scale. 26 people scored exactly 50, exactly in the middle, indicating no impact at all or a mixed impact that on balance was neither positive nor negative. A further 137 people, and the largest number grouping, gave scores around the 50 mark, indicating a combination of both good and bad. At the other end of the scale, 8 individuals scored a perfect 100 – indicating a wholly negative experience - whilst a total of 63 people indicated an experience in the negative quarter.

66 **"It was brilliant. Such a positive thing amid the pandemic."**
Audience

66 **"An uplifting experience"**
Audience

To summarise, around 29% of people had a negative experience, around 62% found the experience mixed and just 9% found the impact of Covid-19 a positive one. With an average answer score of 58 the suggestion is that Covid-19 has had a mixed but tending to negative impact on the audience on average. We think this is why the aim of ‘joy’ was not only so well received but also actively sought out.

In the 2018 report we wrote, **“The festival is a large undertaking for such a small team, and very heavily dependent on volunteers (who outnumber paid staff 10:1). More paid roles are essential in the future to ensure the smooth running and growth.”** And this remains a recommendation. It is too heavily dependent on Charles and Sita pulling in their friends and family and working every possible hour themselves. It is difficult to balance; the personal touch is the part that takes so much time, but it is also a part that the audience clearly responds well to.



“Great festival. MC’s set exactly the right tone. Well done to them!”



Audience



“I appreciated the personalisation approach of hosted events, and there was a really great mix overall. I liked the offer of the after bar although never actually went.”

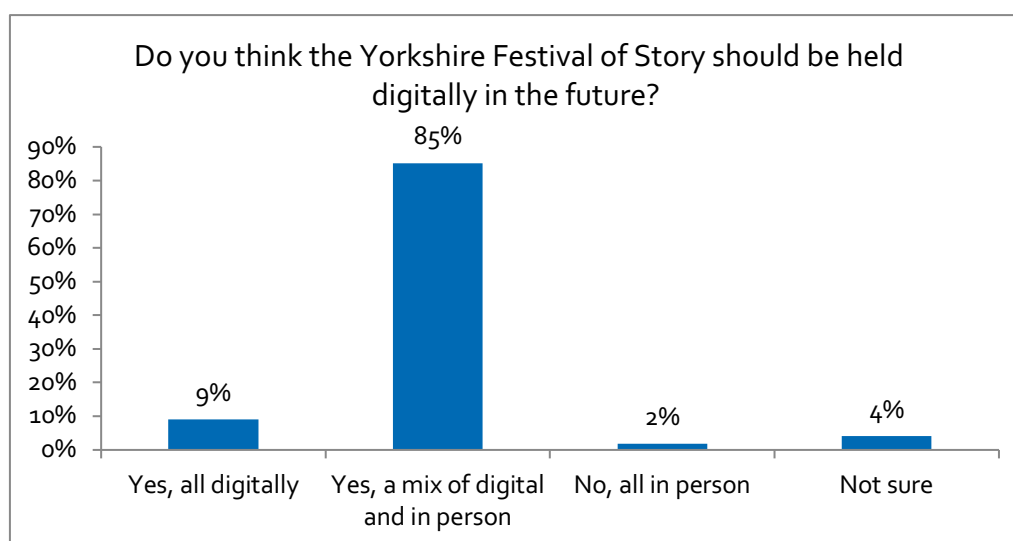


Audience

Charles thinks: **“I think we need to focus on who our audience is and it is clearly mainly women over 50. I think instead of pleasing everyone we should focus. Trying to please everyone makes the festival increasingly hard to market effectively as we are only a small team with limited hours in the day. I think it’s important to still do some work for families, but this is a small strand to a mainly adult festival.”** Other than that, few of the recommendations can be assessed given the huge changes the festival has undergone.

Possibly an adult-focussed festival, with a mix of digital and live events is the solution.

The digital festival was the largest audience Settle Stories have reached, and retaining some digital elements was almost universally agreed upon. One audience member told us, **“This was the best Festival I “attended” this year, beating Reading Fringe, Nanaimo Festival, Sidmouth Folk Festival, Edinburgh Fringe, Edinburgh International Book Festival. I have selfishly asked for the festival to be digital next year as my August is usually spent in Edinburgh and digital lets me do both! Very well done, Settle!”**



Another explained, **“I thought the whole thing was marvellous, particularly given that it was pretty last minute. Quality performances, and very impressed by your management of new technology. It was great that it reached a whole new audience. Obviously, it can't be the same as real life, but on balance I think more was gained than lost.”** This is a crucial point, and a balance of digital and live is required. Balance can be hard though.


The audience was clearly supportive of a mixed approach, and quite small numbers wanted all live or all digital for the future of YFOS. Almost 85% of people want a mix of digital and in person events. Festival organisers should take this into account when planning the next festival. One audience member explained **“If you have a digital component to the 2021 festival, I'll definitely attend.”** And they were not a ‘lone voice’...

- **“I very much enjoyed the events I attended. I do hope it will still be possible to hold at least part of the festival online in future, as I could never attend in person.”**
- **“So I do hope that future festivals will have a digital element even if only in part. Thank you from me. Keep safe and well xx”**
- **“I really enjoyed all the events I watched. I am unlikely to be able to visit in person and would love to be able to watch digitally in future. I had never heard of this festival before and am delighted to have had the pleasure of participating.”**
- **“I really enjoyed the events and would love to attend online again next year”**
- **“I have never been able to attend the Settle events, but this opened a new window/ created a new opportunity and was so worthwhile. Please continue to open the digital window”**


“I think you guys did an amazing job in pulling this off online! Settle is a bit far for me to travel but I'd be keen to join any online offerings at the next YFoS”

 Audience

“I enjoyed my festival experience very much. It didn't feel like I was alone. I'm grateful Settle Stories had the vision to go online. I very much hope they are able to have a live festival weekend next year but hope there might be a small digital element, too.”

 Audience

“After watching the storytelling and taking part in the workshops at the age of 61 I am going to try and alter my profession and try storytelling something I would have been to scared to do before.”

 Audience

While in the interest of presenting a balanced perspective, **“Wonderful! I am looking forward to next year's festival already. Many, many thanks to Settle Stories and all of the amazing story artists. I would be delighted if the events were all held remotely, as well as in person for those who are fortunate enough to be able to attend in person.”** And another audience member similarly explained, **“I hope it will take place in Settle when life returns to normal.”**

One audience member wished for a wholly in-person return, but they were clearly in the minority: **“Apart from live music, not being able to attend YFOS in person in Settle has been my biggest disappointment during lockdown. The festival has an atmosphere, diversity and standard of performance like no other event. We have very much admired and enjoyed the transformation of the festival into a digital event - but it does not replace the magic of attending in person. Some of the events that were pre-recorded for the festival lacked the sparkle of a live performance. Storytelling relies on the immediacy of live interaction between performer and audience for its special magic to happen like no other art form.”**

To conclude; it is clear that the festival met its own aims, producing a joyful festival packed full of high quality arts activity, which spread out across Yorkshire to the rest of the world, helping audiences mix, with particular growth of BAME and disabled audiences, which brought new skills to the artists taking part, and was an actual lifeline for some artists during the overwhelming impact of Covid-19.

The only decision available in 2020 was to go digital or cancel, and digital proved a success. Charles explained, **“We have a unique opportunity to claim this digital space in the storytelling world with an annual storytelling festival.”** Artists created work and reached new audiences around the globe - and were paid. The audience were enthralled and engaged: **“I cannot thank you enough. It was fabulous and absolutely made my otherwise-challenging month. I will do what I can in the indefinite future to support you”** and have a sense of goodwill towards Settle Stories. The new donation model outperformed all previous ticket sales and donations at previous festivals. Settle Stories have built a new community who have invested in the future of the organisation.

“I grew up in Yorkshire (Gargrave), so it was deeply nourishing to know all this was happening in Settle. Seeing the Dales countryside was wonderful, but just hearing the Northern accents was enough to warm my heart!”



Finally, the profile of the organisation, and of Yorkshire itself has increased. One audience member explained, **“I wish I'd heard about it sooner because the one event I went to (the final event) was so excellent! Great speaker, so well organised, exciting to see people from all over the world tuning in and being so enthusiastic about same things. Made me feel really good about Yorkshire at a time when I rarely feel good about Britain. Made me feel in touch with Settle, which I know quite well. Thank you all very much indeed!”**

“I really enjoyed the events I watched and think it's so amazing that this festival comes from my home town of Settle. It's brilliant that these events can reach people locally and now internationally from such a small rural town. As a young person from Settle, Settle Stories was really the first of its kind and allows people like me, who might never otherwise have had access to such events, to watch and experience them.”



Charles said, **“Having Yorkshire legend Joanne Harris made a real impact. She opened up her address book and was a huge help.”**

“It was a lovely breath of home for the many Yorkshire expats living away from England.”

Happening during Covid-19, the festival had a story to tell. **“The arts can help us find healing, connection and meaning, especially during a crisis. But the economic impacts of the virus are devastating the arts ecosystem. Societies need to find ways to support the arts which reach beyond the biggest and highest profile organisations, and focus much more on local, participatory projects.”** - A&J Evans, Collective Resilience, 2020. It is clear the story is not yet finished, there is more to be done, as a new story of recovery from 2020 is likely to be the current story for some time yet.

**“Brilliant!
Cannot wait for YFOS
2021!”**



ABOUT THE EVALUATOR

This report was written by Kirsty Rose Parker, founder director of The Evaluator and an experienced project manager and evaluator, who previously specialised in arts, regeneration, and wellbeing projects. Kirsty has an educational background in Maths and Economics which covered many statistical topics, leading to an MA Hons in Economics from the University of Edinburgh. Kirsty has 16 years of charitable project management experience including working with vulnerable adults, young people, and a wide range of partners including artists and audiences, and 9 years' experience of arts development. She is trained in negotiation, motivational interviewing and 'social return on investment' and is passionate about helping organisations to run the most effective programmes they can.

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Evaluator**
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THANK YOU

A HUGE thanks to Festival Guest Director Joanne Harris (MBE) all the funders, sponsors, supporters, volunteers, and audiences for making Yorkshire Festival of Story possible. Special thanks to:

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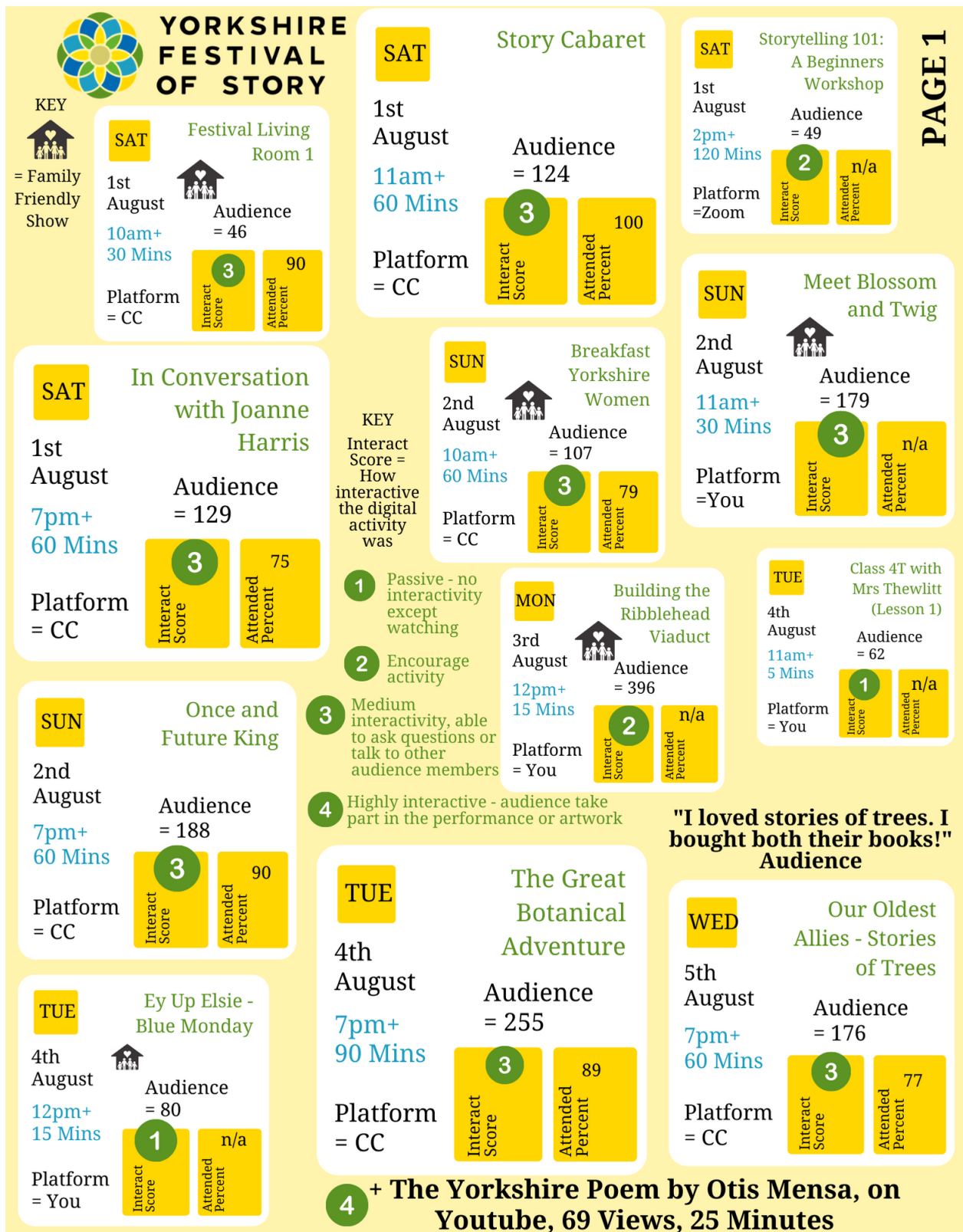
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Sita & Charles would like to say a special thanks to all of Settle Stories staff and Trustees. Extended thanks go out to all the volunteers who made the programme possible with particular thanks to Dunstan Tough (SEO) Miriam Wilson (fundraiser), Tess Brophy (social media) and Annie & Maria Farrer who supported the creation of our Reginald Farrer commission.





YORKSHIRE FESTIVAL OF STORY

PAGE 2

THU

Class 4T with
Mrs Thewlitt
(Lesson 2)

6th
August
11am+
5 Mins

Audience
= 23

1

n/a

Platform
= You

Interact
Score

Attended
Percent

THU

Ey Up Elsie -
Billy Slingers
Bicycle

6th
August
12pm+
15 Mins

Audience
= 55

1

n/a

Platform
= You

Interact
Score

Attended
Percent

THU

12 Silk
Handkerchiefs

6th
August

Audience
= 163

7pm+
90 Mins

3

86

Platform
= CC

Interact
Score

Attended
Percent

FRI

Bedtime Tales -
The Golden
Thread

7th
August
6.30pm+
15 Mins

Audience
= 145

1

n/a

Platform
= You

Interact
Score

Attended
Percent

SAT

Festival Living
Room 2

8th
August
10am+
30 Mins

Audience
= 56

3

89

Platform
= CC

Interact
Score

Attended
Percent

SAT

The Magical
World of
Traditional Tales

8th
August

Audience
= 143

10.30am+
60 Mins

3

68

Platform
= CC

Interact
Score

Attended
Percent

SAT

Create a Comic
Strip

8th
August
2pm+
120 Mins

Audience
= 41

3

n/a

Platform
= CC

Interact
Score

Attended
Percent

SAT

Exotic Pleasure

8th
August
7pm+
60 Mins

Audience
= 117

3

81

Platform
= CC

Interact
Score

Attended
Percent

SUN

Marvellous Art
Workshop

9th
August

Audience
= 44

11am+
20 Mins

2

n/a

Platform
= You

Interact
Score

Attended
Percent

MON

Ey Up Elsie - The
Austwick
Brothers

10th
August

Audience
= 13

12pm+
15 Mins

1

n/a

Platform
= You

Interact
Score

Attended
Percent

SUN

Learn to Juggle

9th
August

11.30am+
20 Mins

Audience
= 25

2

n/a

Platform
= You

Interact
Score

Attended
Percent

SUN

LOKI

9th
August

7pm+
60 Mins

Audience
= 183

3

86

Platform
= CC

Interact
Score

Attended
Percent

"Loki was a vision."
Audience

"Loki is a brilliant story
and greatly delivered."
Audience



YORKSHIRE FESTIVAL OF STORY

PAGE 3

TUE

Class 4T with
Mrs Thewlitt
(Lesson 3)

11th
August
Audience
= 27

11am+
5 Mins

Platform
= You

Interact
Score
1

Attended
Percent
n/a

TUE

Roald Dahl and
the Imagination
Seekers

11th
August



2pm+
60 Mins

Platform
= CC

Audience
= 33

Interact
Score
3

Attended
Percent
50

TUE

Blood and Gold

11th
August



7pm+
90 Mins

Platform
= CC

Audience
= 214

Interact
Score
3

Attended
Percent
80

"Mara Menzies (Blood and Gold)
was outstanding" Audience

WED

Ey Up Elsie - Cat
Out of the Bag

12th
August

12pm+
15 Mins

Platform
= You

Audience
= 18

Interact
Score
1

Attended
Percent
n/a

WED

How can we
avoid Cultural
Catastrophe?

12th
August

2.30pm+
60 Mins

Platform
= CC

Audience
= 46

Interact
Score
3

Attended
Percent
73

WED

A Single Thread

12th
August

7pm+
60 Mins

Platform
= CC

Audience
= 105

Interact
Score
3

Attended
Percent
74

THU

Class 4T with
Mrs Thewlitt
(Lesson 4)

13th
August
Audience
= 21

11am+
5 Mins

Platform
= You

Interact
Score
1

Attended
Percent
n/a

THU

Folk at Sea

13th
August

7pm+
60 Mins

Platform
= CC

Audience
= 121

Interact
Score
3

Attended
Percent
87

FRI

Ey Up Elsie - The
Ryland Games

14th
August

12pm+
15 Mins

Platform
= You

Audience
= 32

Interact
Score
1

Attended
Percent
n/a

FRI

The Geography
of Me

14th
August

7pm+
90 Mins

Platform
= CC

Audience
= 87

Interact
Score
3

Attended
Percent
80

FRI

Bedtime Tales -
Wilfred Wasp

14th
August

6.30pm+
15 Mins

Platform
= You

Audience
= 84

Interact
Score
1

Attended
Percent
n/a

Evaluation
Finding:
Audiences were
lowest on
Wednesdays
and Fridays

SAT

Festival Living
Room 3

15th
August

10am+
30 Mins

Platform
= CC

Audience
= 24

Interact
Score
3

Attended
Percent
92

SAT

The Forgotten
Tales

15th
August

10.30am+
60 Mins

Platform
= CC



Audience
= 125

Interact
Score
3

Attended
Percent
83

"Really
enjoyed Jon
Buckeridge's
(Forgotten
Tales)
contribution"
Audience



SAT Vegan Truffle Making Workshop
15th August
Audience = 46
2pm+ 120 Mins
Platform = CC
Interact Score **3** Attended Percent **74**

SAT Travellers Tales from Across the Globe
15th August
Audience = 181
7pm+ 60 Mins
Platform = CC
Interact Score **3** Attended Percent **79**

SUN Creative Writing Workshop
16th August
Audience = 32
11am+ 30 Mins
Platform = You
Interact Score **2** Attended Percent **n/a**

SUN Visual Storytelling
16th August
Audience = 80
7pm+ 60 Mins
Platform = CC
Interact Score **3** Attended Percent **81**

MON My Heart, My Heart, Live Jukebox Poetry
17th August
Audience = 20
10am+ 30 Mins
Platform = Zoom
Interact Score **4** Attended Percent **n/a**

MON Ey Up Elsie - DJ Whoopy
17th August
Audience = 22
12pm+ 15 Mins
Platform = You
Interact Score **1** Attended Percent **n/a**

TUE Class 4T with Mrs Thewlitt (Lesson 5)
18th August
Audience = 24
11am+ 5 Mins
Platform = You
Interact Score **1** Attended Percent **n/a**

WED My Heart, My Heart: Live Jukebox Poetry
19th August
Audience = 8
10am+ 30 Mins
Platform = Zoom
Interact Score **4** Attended Percent **n/a**

TUE My Heart, My Heart: Live Jukebox Poetry
18th August
Audience = 14
10am+ 30 Mins
Platform = Zoom
Interact Score **4** Attended Percent **n/a**

TUE Tales from my Grandmothers lips
18th August
Audience = 184
7pm+ 60 Mins
Platform = CC
Interact Score **3** Attended Percent **84**

THU My Heart, My Heart: Live Jukebox Poetry
20th August
Audience = 9
10am+ 30 Mins
Platform = Zoom
Interact Score **4** Attended Percent **n/a**

WED Ey Up Elsie - My Grandad Built Malham Cove
19th August
Audience = 14
12pm+ 15 Mins
Platform = You
Interact Score **1** Attended Percent **n/a**

WED Youth of the Rural North
19th August
Audience = 94
7pm+ 60 Mins
Platform = CC
Interact Score **3** Attended Percent **89**

THU Class 4T with Mrs Thewlitt (Lesson 6)
20th August
Audience = 20
11am+ 5 Mins
Platform = You
Interact Score **1** Attended Percent **n/a**

Evaluation Finding:
Audiences were highest when the activity held some interactivity - but not too much!

THU Storytelling through Song
20th August
Audience = 161
7pm+ 60 Mins
Platform = CC
Interact Score **3** Attended Percent **91**

FRI My Heart, My Heart: Live Jukebox Poetry
21st August
Audience = 13
10am+ 30 Mins
Platform = Zoom
Interact Score **4** Attended Percent **n/a**

Evaluation Finding:
88% of all the audience minutes spent enjoying the festival, were spent on events held on Crowdcast.



YORKSHIRE FESTIVAL OF STORY

FRI Ey Up Elsie - Nanna's Knitting Shop

21st August

12pm+ 15 Mins

Audience = 17

Platform = You

Interact Score: 1

Attended Percent: n/a

FRI Bedtime Tales - Brother Haynad

21st August

6.30pm+ 15 Mins

Audience = 60

Platform = You

Interact Score: 1

Attended Percent: n/a

SAT Festival Living Room 4

22nd August

10am+ 30 Mins

Audience = 15

Platform = CC

Interact Score: 3

Attended Percent: 75

SAT My Heart, My Heart: Live Jukebox Poetry

22nd August

10am+ 30 Mins

Audience = 8

Platform = Zoom

Interact Score: 4

Attended Percent: n/a

SAT Story Expedition

22nd August

11am+ 60 Mins

Audience = 46

Platform = Zoom

Interact Score: 3

Attended Percent: n/a

SAT Get into the Story

22nd August

2pm+ 120 Mins

Audience = 52

Platform = Zoom

Interact Score: 4

Attended Percent: n/a

"Clare Murphy's workshop (Get Into The Story) was enlightening" Audience

SAT Prayer for the Living

22nd August

7pm+ 60 Mins

Audience = 174

Platform = CC

Interact Score: 3

Attended Percent: 78

SUN My Heart, My Heart: Live Jukebox Poetry

23rd August

10am+ 30 Mins

Audience = 9

Platform = Zoom

Interact Score: 4

Attended Percent: n/a

SUN Castles in the Air - Creative Workshop

23rd August

11am+ 20 Mins

Audience = 11

Platform = You

Interact Score: 2

Attended Percent: n/a

MON Ey Up Elsie - Nessa and Stacey Lost in the Pipes

24th August

12pm+ 15 Mins

Audience = 12

Platform = You

Interact Score: 1

Attended Percent: n/a

Evaluation Finding:
1/4 of all the time spent watching the festival happened on Saturdays

TUE Jan Blake: You Decide the Story

25th August

7pm+ 60 Mins

Audience = 124

Platform = CC

Interact Score: 3

Attended Percent: 86

SUN Anne Bronte: Amid the Brave and Strong

23rd August

7pm+ 60 Mins

Audience = 111

Platform = CC

Interact Score: 3

Attended Percent: 80

"I especially enjoyed the talk on Anne Bronte and have started reading The Tenant of Wildfell Hall" Audience

"If it hadn't been online, I wouldn't have had any chance to listen to the most interesting talk about Anne Bronte" Audience

TUE Ey Up Elsie - One Man and his Dog

25th August

12pm+ 15 Mins

Audience = 10

Platform = You

Interact Score: 1

Attended Percent: n/a

WED Ey Up Elsie - The Biggest Catch

26th August

12pm+ 15 Mins

Audience = 8

Platform = You

Interact Score: 1

Attended Percent: n/a

