GLASGOW TIMES

Glasgow's Platform celebrates 20 years at heart of Easterhouse

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Eoin McKenzie (Image: Robert Perry/Newsquest

As a shy 10-year-old, sent to drama classes to build his confidence, **Eoin McKenzie** remembers the excitement which rippled through the East End of Glasgow when Platform first opened its doors.

It was 20 years ago, and the theatre and arts centre (which combined with a swimming pool and library to form The Bridge complex) was like nothing he had ever experienced before.

“To suddenly have this place on our doorstep was great,” says Eoin, smiling.

“At the start it was bonkers - Belgian drama, visual art, music – things we’d probably never have seen or heard otherwise.



IMAGE: Eoin aged 16 in I Am What I Am – performed by Lab Station Theatre Group – Platform's drama group for young people (now called Monday Night Drama). (Image: Kat Gollock)

He grins. "And I loved having all these cool adults around. They were just really different from teachers and parents.

"Without Platform, we wouldn't have had any of it.



IMAGE: Eoin McKenzie (Image: Robert Perry/Newsquest)

Without **Platform, which is marking its 20th anniversary today** (Friday, October 23) with the Made in Easterhouse festival, Eoin may also be living a different life, he says.

"I was sent to drama classes against my will," he jokes. "I was quite shy, and I think my mum thought doing drama would be good for me.

"I did workshops with the **National Theatre of Scotland,** who were the first tenant here, and really enjoyed it. And here I am, 20 years later, the venue's performance programmer. They haven't been able to get rid of me."



Matt Addicott, Artistic Director of Platform in Easterhouse, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary. (Image: Andrew Perry)

He adds: “I grew up with Platform, and I can see the impact the place has had. It’s changed our community, and I wouldn’t be doing what I do without it.”

Eoin and Visual Arts Programmer Margaret McCormick have curated the festival, which includes live music, comedy, visual art and work grown directly out of the building, including Yer Da Works At Tesco, an anarchic anti-capitalist performance made by a group of teenagers who meet at Platform every week. Tickets cost just £5.



IMAGE: The Platform 20th anniversary parade at the Bridge Festival earlier this year (Image: Andrew Perry)

Eoin said: “Made in Easterhouse feels like a chance to celebrate not just what has happened here over the last two decades, but the particular kind of arts centre Platform has become – and what it might become next.”

The staff team at Platform is “tiny”, says Eoin, but they know everyone coming through their doors.

“We are all very conscious at the moment of how so many cultural spaces are in managed decline,” he says. “So having a venue where folk can come and participate either for free or on a pay what you can afford basis, goes a long way to removing barriers and creating connections.

“It helps people build confidence, move out of isolation, and inspires young people to study in the creative industries. We genuinely care about pathways.”

He pauses. “Actually, the building was built on local desire paths – the shortcuts people took from the shops to their houses – so it was actually already on the way for them,” he says.

“We are literally right on the route they wanted to take.”



IMAGE: Kit McKeown / Image Euan Robertson

Kit McKeown, 86, has been attending Platform for 10 years, and is part of Art Factory, People’s Company Drama group and the Platform Singers Choir.

“It’s very easy to attend things at Platform and the people and the staff are friendly and approachable,” she says. “There is no judgment. There’s great variety and I like to have a go and learn new things and that’s what I do here.”

The anniversary celebrations also include **Cranhill Arts’ Glaswegians exhibition,** which includes portraits taken by local photographers over a period of four years in the 80s and 90s.



IMAGE: Helen Charman

Made in Easterhouse will also include work by Helen Charman, who is researching the Platform archive to create a piece of writing.

“As well as exploring twenty years of archive material, I’ve been spending time with as many groups as possible and talking to people who use and love Platform about what it means to them,” said Helen.

“Together, we’re doing some creative writing that weaves together personal histories and memories of life at Platform with our hopes for its future.

“The life of an arts centre is in the people who use it, and it was important to me from the beginning that this project would be an open, collaborative one, full of many different voices — like the building itself.”

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