

When Old Age Is A Fun Age – Children Are *Not* The (foreseeable) Future!

I love live theatre and from childhood to mature performer and writer have craved its blissful embrace. (*Don't worry that's the last Luvvie declaration!*) So, when I had the opportunity of sharing my delight in drama with an older generation the 50 year old renowned Chorlton Good Neighbours Community (CGN) in Manchester, I was in my element!

Equally exciting was the chance to address the corrosive misconceptions which plague us with the so-called "Generational War"; a war fought over the misperceived "*it's so unfair*" comfort and financial stability of the old versus the dejected, debt ridden young. Elders are seen to be a drag on self-reverential, "snowflake", media worshipped youth. An inconvenience. A growing burden stripping the state's coffers in health and maintenance costs. Becoming older tinged with the sepia misery of impending physical and mental impairment when the young, despite their ruddy youth are denied mortgages, free time and peace of mind.

Oldies are gracelessly encouraged to hand over their abundance to the sprogs. But the very worst malediction is that they "*Shouldn't be having fun - it's too embarrassing*". Watching Older people dance and play and just have a laugh being daft is unbearable mortification for the Young.

So, I thought "lets change that for a start" when I had the good fortune of finding a like-minded, iconoclast and champion of Older people in CGN's Coordinator Helen Hibberd MBE. My drama workshop partner and mentor has helped nurture and develop the workshops and we are now in our 2nd successful year. Over a hundred older local residents have taken part in the four series of workshops.



Participants ages ran from their 50s to a wonderfully enthusiastic 92 and our star 89-year-old Enid Woods who wowed the audience of HOME International Arts Centre's Theatre in Manchester with the lead role in my 70s themed comedy musical "*MADCHESTER '70s - What are you doing Sunday Baby*".

Whilst a fresh bunch of our Senior actors brought the main 450 seat theatre to tears of laughter and astonishment with the presentation of

"*Snowed In*" a madcap cheeky, surreal, comedy about singing cats with Christmassy, Halloween and Scooby Doo mystery themes. <https://homemcr.org/article/homeinspires-blog-5-who-are-you-calling-old/>

Despite early days of nervous anticipation, diffident commitment to the characters portrayed and awkward embarrassment, once our workshop members were given freedom to express their creativity, they became unstoppable and awfully difficult to control! But what an irresistible delight both for themselves and their audiences! One of the participants described it as *“having fun but also making friendships and building confidence in those who don't have it.”*

Wonderful transformations were seen including one lady, who had not left her home for five years after a fall, coming out of her shell and singing beautifully in front of a mass audience. Whilst others threw caution, propriety and walking aids to the wind and danced to Disco and Abba!



Now our workshop participants have bolder and bigger plans to take back their inalienable human right to fun and silliness and, indeed, take back the streets with plans for Flash Mobs on the Manchester Tram and the Chorlton Arts Festival. Despite being sadly turned down by Manchester International Festival another Manchester Festival aptly named: *“The Festival of Manchester”* invited us to be part of their open-air celebration on August 31st in Platt Fields: *“A fabulous day of celebration and entertainment for the people of Manchester, by the people of Manchester”* .Please come and support us.

Chorlton Good Neighbour’s Drama Workshops were started to open a chink of light into the joy of silliness that youth seems to have arbitrarily appropriated. Now it feels like Life’s possibilities are endless as our participants realise that ageing is not automatically about limitations and really is all just in the mind. So live for today. Living in the past gets old so quickly. Whether you are 59 or 109 you have the same time in the same day and the same chance for as much fun as you can handle. Enjoy being silly and making happy memories!

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Nakib’s new play *Ellen's Longest Night* about the amazing, scandalously forgotten Stateswoman Ellen Wilkinson which will be staged at the National Museum of Democracy in Manchester on November 10th before a Theatre Tour. : <https://phm.org.uk/events/ellens-longest-night-a-play-by-nakib-narat/> It is of great interest to Older people because of the era. its set in.