

Press Release

For immediate release



Image Left – Little Amal © Teatro Pubblico Pugliese



Image Right – Little Amal © Sokratis Baltagiannis

Manchester welcomes Little Amal for the culmination of The Walk

The epic 8000km journey of Little Amal, a nine-year-old refugee girl in the form of a 3.5 metre puppet that began in late July at the Turkish-Syrian border comes to a close in Manchester.

Amal will visit Rochdale and Wigan before the city welcomes her in a free event at Castlefield Bowl produced by Manchester International Festival (MIF)

Manchester International Festival will stage the finale event of *The Walk*, on Wednesday 3 November, the culmination of the extraordinary journey from **Gaziantep in Turkey to Manchester** of a 3.5m tall puppet of a nine-year-old Syrian refugee **Little Amal**.

This extensive public art project is produced by Stephen Daldry, David Lan, Tracey Seaward and Naomi Webb for **Good Chance**, co-producers of the critically-acclaimed *The Jungle*, in association with **Handspring Puppet Company**, world-famous creators of the horse puppets in *War Horse*, and led by Good Chance's Artistic Director **Amir Nizar Zuabi**.

Little Amal has travelled from the Syrian border across Turkey, Greece, Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany and Belgium in search of her mother. In 65 villages, towns and cities she has been welcomed by artists of every kind - dancers, singers, film makers, painters - as well as civil society and faith leaders at the highest level. Her journey represents those taken by the millions of people who have been violently displaced by war or persecution, especially children. At this time of multiple global crises Amal's urgent message to the world is "Don't forget about us".

The finale moment of *The Walk* will be marked with a free large-scale outdoor event titled *When the Birds*

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Land at 7pm on 3 November in Manchester, a city that has long welcomed its diverse and dynamic population of refugee and migrant communities, and has the highest concentration of dispersed asylum seekers in the UK outside of London. The openhearted spirit of the city will be displayed with people of all ages and from all areas of Manchester, greeting Little Amal through live music and song, puppetry and dance. *When the Birds Land*, has been created through collaboration with an advisory group created by MIF, made up of adults who identify as refugees and asylum seekers and their allies, as well as a creative team that includes renowned puppeteer **Sarah Wright** and led by film and theatre director **Simon Stone** (*The Dig*, *Yerma*).

A creative learning programme led by MIF running throughout October will engage around 4,000 pupils through distribution of education packs, plus music sessions with **Music Action International** and creative dance and drama workshops with **Magdalen Bartlett** will take place across 10 primary schools in Greater Manchester. **Manchester Street Poem**, an art collective of people with lived experience of homelessness, will create a book of stories for Little Amal, whilst **Caring and Sharing**, **Rethink Rebuild Society**, and **Support for Wigan Arrivals Project**, community organisations who support asylum seekers, will create a patchwork quilt for Little Amal with local artist **Ibukun Baldwin**. On the 31 October and 2 November, Little Amal will go to Wigan and Rochdale visiting communities there ahead of *The Walk*'s culmination.

John McGrath, Artistic Director and Chief Executive of Manchester International Festival said *"We're delighted to be a major partner on The Walk. At Manchester International Festival we have a proud history of creating participatory events that bring the city together. As we continue to navigate these uncertain times, the power of arts and projects like these to start important conversations, create connections and safely bring communities together is more important than ever. We hope that everyone who calls Greater Manchester their home, will help us welcome Little Amal when she arrives at the end of her long journey."*

Amir Nizar Zuabi, Artistic Director of The Walk stated *"It is because the attention of the world is elsewhere right now that it is more important than ever to reignite the conversation about the refugee crisis and change the narrative around it. Yes, refugees need food and blankets, but they also need dignity and a voice. The purpose of The Walk is to highlight the potential of the refugee, not just their dire circumstances. Little Amal is 3.5 metres tall because we want her to inspire us to think big and to act bigger."*

Tickets for *The Walk: When the Birds Land* are free and can be booked at mif.co.uk from 14 October. To get involved in the creative learning programme visit mif.co.uk

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

Listings

The Walk
7pm, 3 November 2021
Castlefield Bowl
Free admission

mif.co.uk

walkwithamal.org

MIF Manchester International Festival

@walkwithamal
#LittleAmal
#TheWalk
#WelcomeLittleAmal

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Download high resolution images [here](#)

Creative Team

Artistic Director Amir Nizar Zuabi
Puppet Design & Build Handspring Puppet Company
Puppetry Directors Craig Leo and Enrico Dau Yang Wey
Puppetry Associate Sarah Wright
Costume Designer Annie Symons

MIF Creative Team

Director Simon Stone
Designer Lizzie Clachan
Puppet Director Sarah Wright
Choreography Yandass Ndlovu

Producers Stephen Daldry, David Lan, Tracey Seaward, Naomi Webb for Good Chance
Artistic Directors for Good Chance Joe Robertson and Joe Murphy
Executive Producer Kevin Fitzmaurice
General Manager Sarah Loader
Production Manager Patrick Glackin
Producer in Turkey Recep Tuna and IKSv
Producer in Greece Yolanda Markopoulou
Producer in Italy Roberto Roberto and Ludovica Tinghi
Producer in France, Switzerland, Belgium & Germany Claire Béjanin

Producers for MIF

Artistic Director & Chief Executive John McGrath
Creative Director Mark Ball
Executive Producer Fiona Pride
Producer Anna Moutrey
Associate Producer Katherine Wilde
Engagement Manager Abir Tobji

Lands in Exile Programme Consultant Jumana Al-Yasiri

Land in Exile Artists Omar Abu Saada, Bissane Al Charif, Ammar al-Beik, Mudar Alhaggi, Kinan Azmeh, Tammam Azzam, Batool Mohamad AKA OM.EL BEAT, One Hand Puppet, Maryam Samaan, Tanween Company for Theatre and Dance, Liwaa Yazji

Manchester International Festival

Good Chance

In a planet increasingly divided and divisive, Good Chance creates pop-up Theatres of Hope and collaborates with artists from across the world to connect people, stories and cultures.

Founded by British playwrights Joe Murphy and Joe Robertson, Good Chance established its first Theatre of Hope, a 12m geodesic Dome, in the heart of the refugee and migrant camp in Calais in 2015, promoting freedom of expression, creativity and dignity for everyone. The Dome has since risen in London, Paris, New York, Coventry and Sheffield, in areas with high refugee populations with the aim to create meaningful opportunities for immigrant and local communities to engage and connect through art.

Alongside the Dome theatres, the company creates groundbreaking Good Chance Productions, with the multi-award winning, five-star play *The Jungle* playing in London, New York and San Francisco to unprecedented critical and audience response. It returns to New York in 2021 before embarking on a US tour. *The Jungle* is the winner of the South Bank Sky Arts Award for Theatre, the Evening Standard Award for Best Design, Best New Production Award at Broadway World UK, Mousetrapp Award for Special Recognition for contribution to Theatre, Best Production at the San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle and a Special OBIE Award.

The company also works artists from across the world through the Good Chance Ensemble, including the Zimbabwean, Sudanese and Syrian music collective whose album *Sounds of Refuge* was recorded at Abbey Road Studios and the Change the Word creative writing collective which brings together people from different communities to share ideas, stories and spaces. Good Chance's ensemble of refugee performers born out of the domes in Paris, La Troupe, has performed at the Festival of Cultural Rights in Reims, the Forum des Mécènes at the College de France, and at the Pompidou Centre at the Christian Boltanski retrospective.

Good Chance is a recipient of the Evening Standard Editor's Award (2016), an Empty Space Peter Brook Award (2017) and the Genesis Award (2018).

Handspring Puppet Company

Handspring Puppet Company was founded in 1981 in Cape Town, South Africa and has grown under the leadership of Artistic Director Adrian Kohler and Executive Producer Basil Jones for 40 years. Handspring's work has been presented in more than 30 countries around the world. The company is widely recognised as South Africa's preeminent puppet theatre company with work spanning four decades of creating theatre for adults and children. Handspring's work has established its signature of artistic excellence through the use of finely crafted puppets within a live theatrical context. The marriage of the disciplines of Fine Art and Theatre is at the heart of the discipline of puppetry in general and Handspring's work in particular.

The runaway hit play *War Horse*, produced by the National Theatre in London, has established Handspring as one of the most important puppet companies in the world. This success has afforded the company the opportunity to further develop the art form they are so passionate about.

Manchester International Festival

Manchester International Festival (MIF) was founded as the world's first festival of original, new work and special events and is an artist-led festival reflecting the spectrum of performing arts, visual arts and popular culture.

MIF Manchester International Festival

Staged every two years in Manchester, MIF has commissioned, produced and presented world premieres by artists including Marina Abramović, Damon Albarn, Laurie Anderson, Björk, Boris Charmatz, Jeremy Deller, Idris Elba and Kwame Kwei-Armah, Elbow, Philip Glass and Phelim McDermott, David Lynch, Wayne McGregor, Steve McQueen, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Yoko Ono, Thomas Ostermeier, Maxine Peake, Punchdrunk, Skepta, The xx, Robert Wilson and Zaha Hadid Architects.

These and other world-renowned artists from different art forms and backgrounds create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work, staged in venues across Greater Manchester – from theatres, galleries and concert halls to railway depots, churches and car parks. MIF works closely with venues, festivals and other cultural organisations globally, whose financial and creative input helps to make many of these projects possible and ensures that work made at MIF goes on to be seen around the world.

MIF supports a year-round Creative Engagement programme, bringing opportunities for people from all backgrounds, ages and from all corners of the city to get involved during the Festival and year-round, as volunteers, as participants in shows, through skills development and a host of creative activities, such as Festival in My House.

MIF will also run The Factory, the new world-class cultural space currently being built in the heart of Manchester and designed by internationally-renowned architects Rem Koolhaas' Office for Metropolitan Architecture. The Factory will commission, present and produce a year-round programme, featuring new work from the world's greatest artists and offering a space to make, explore and experiment. Attracting up to 850,000 visitors annually, The Factory will add £1.1 billion to the economy and create 1,500 jobs. Its pioneering programme of skills, training and engagement will benefit local people and the next generation of creative talent from across the city, whilst apprenticeships and trainee schemes are already underway during the construction phase.

MIF's Artistic Director and Chief Executive is John McGrath.

mif.co.uk