

Midland Actors Theatre perform during Birmingham Heritage Week

Today, young people in Birmingham are revealing the city's lost heritage after taking part in a HLF-supported youth research project.

In January, £34,100 was awarded to Midland Actors Theatre for the Heritage, Community Traditions and Identity project, investigating the different populations who moved to Birmingham throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

From 'Little Italy' in Digbeth to the Jewish Quarter around Ellis Street, groups from local schools have researched the motivations and traditions of these now largely dispersed communities.

The groups are now coming together for a major event at Newman University to share their discoveries through presentations, film showings and drama performances. There are workshops and talks from local historians, including Professor Carl Chinn.

Discovering Young Roots

Participants from Al-Hijrah School, George Dixon Academy, Perry Beeches Academy II and Kingshurst Academy researched the history of areas of the city near to their schools, recording oral histories from former and current residents and learning to perform traditional dance, music and folk stories.

[quote=Vanessa Harbar, Head of HLF West Midlands]“Our Young Roots programme is all about empowering young people to take the lead and explore their local heritage. This project does exactly that.”[/quote]

Hollie Wynde, Event Co-ordinator, said: “We’ve all been working separately up to now so it will be really exciting to find out what the other groups have been doing. I think we have all been making connections between the stories of the people who came to this country from Italy or Poland in the 19th century – and the population movements we are seeing today. It’s also made us all want to know more about our own family histories.”

The project has also explored whether migrant communities can maintain their culture and identity in a new place or if it will inevitably be eroded over time.

Birmingham’s youth heritage

The event follows a bumper year of youth engagement and investment in Birmingham through the Routes2Roots campaign, which encouraged applicants to the Young Roots funding programme. A total of £326,900 of National Lottery funding has been awarded to youth-led projects in Birmingham.

Vanessa Harbar, Head of HLF West Midlands, said: “Our Young Roots programme is all about empowering young people to take the lead and explore their local heritage. This project does exactly that. We’re proud that, thanks to National Lottery players, we can support Midland Actors to discover Birmingham’s ‘lost communities’ and look forward to seeing the result of their hard work.”



Young volunteers in Birmingham



Changi… …ts co-creators



New youth heritage campaign 'Routes2Roots' launches