

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## One in Ten

Rachel Bower, writer, Kieran Lucas, sound designer and Theo Whitworth, composer  
Creative Manchester  
Longsight Library and Learning Centre, Manchester  
12–13 June 2024

Manchester libraries saved what passes for my sanity during lockdown offering a degree of social contact and novelty in a desperate period by providing books handed over in a covert manner as if in a spy novel. Currently, Creative Manchester is celebrating the vital work of libraries with the Manchester Festival of Libraries being held across the region from 12 to 16 June.

The industrial area around Belle Vue offers few lunchtime diversions for workers, so Longsight Library and Learning Centre is like an oasis providing access to books, comics and computers. Currently, as part of the festival, it is hosting *One in Ten*, an immersive audio experience designed specifically for public libraries. The target audience for the presentation is unclear. The invitation to specify three words associated with coughing and colour parts of an illustration seems appropriate for a younger age group than the one gathered in the library. On the other hand, youngsters might not appreciate the anecdotes or technical explanations.

Chronic cough, defined as a cough that lasts longer than eight weeks and doesn't go away or respond to treatment, affects one in ten people. Debilitating symptoms include sleepless nights, social embarrassment, urinary incontinence and blackouts. By coincidence, sufferers from the condition all seem to attend the theatre on the same night as me.

The concept behind *One in Ten* is to raise awareness of the condition by allowing the audience to experience examples of, and responses to, chronic coughing while using the facilities at the library. Upon entry, audience members are issued headphones and encouraged to behave as if using the library facilities—wandering around looking at the stock and displays—whilst listening to the presentation. Gradually, however, efforts to use the library are subtly interrupted as the soundscape designed by Kieran Lucas includes the growing noise of coughing and hushed whispers from people angrily drawing attention to the antisocial action and demanding the coughing cease.

There is a new-age tone to the presentation. The background is an ethereal soundtrack composed by Theo Whitworth. The script by Rachel Bower includes advice to the listener on becoming aware of their surroundings and their bodies and encouraging the making of eye contact with other participants.

Excerpts from interviews with people living with chronic cough are part of the presentation. The physical and mental impact of the condition is explained with a degree of humour; including social embarrassment at being singled out for criticism by a conductor at a classical music concert or rushed to hospital by a coach driver who concluded the condition required emergency treatment. Bower's script includes scientific explanations for the origins of chronic cough (asthma, acid reflux) and the possible hope of resolution by treatment via the nervous system.

*One in Ten* makes imaginative use of the library to raise awareness of the debilitating social impact of a condition too-often dismissed as an irritant or affectation.

**Reviewer:** [David Cunningham](#)