It Takes a Village

by Jasmine Gardosi

It takes a village to raise a child.
I knew that.
But what I've learnt today is that
it also takes a village to raise a poet,
a painter,
a dance,
creator.

Sometimes it takes a town,
it takes a county
it takes a metropolitan borough
it takes a city to raise an artist.

And within each of these
it takes the LCEPs
working with teachers, the hubs, the artistic leaders.
It takes the volunteers, the innovators, the pioneers
the ones who have all the crazy ideas like
'how about we actually let the young people steer?'
ideas like 'let's make this building more than a hospital,
stitch the fabric of culture into its very bricks.'
It takes all this to raise an artist.

It takes the ones who do the invisible labour.
It takes the sustainers
the ones who 'drop /wicked /ambitious /pincer movements'
to connect these networks,
It takes the liaisors
between the schools and the creators,
the communities and the workshop facilitators.
It takes all of this to raise an artist.

It takes all of us working together
an empowered
people-powered
S.T.E.A.M-powered machine,

creative
communicative
collaborative
cohesive
a community
a culture.

It takes a village to raise a poet
and this city with, all these things,
raised me

It takes a village to raise a child
but it also takes a system to erase a child
It also takes a system to fail a child
Just one budget cut, one funding drop
that means that we can't save a child.
How many voices go quiet and we weren't even around to hear it?

Post-pandemic deficits
arts funder apathy
and general lack of energy
want to force us apart.

After all, in a cost of living crisis who wants to prioritise the arts?

Let's remember how the Arts Connect us
into something that is stronger than the sum of our parts.

It takes a village to raise a child
But it takes one difference to change a child
into a self-believer
into an "I can achieve"er

It takes an artist to raise a village, a town, a borough, a city
up into celebration
up into significance
beyond its roads
beyond its bricks.

Let's keep working because it is working -

and in another few generations,
let's see what sticks.