



BISHOPSGATE INSTITUTE

PAST PRESENT FUTURE

WHO WE ARE

Bishopsgate Institute was “erected for the benefit of the public” in 1894, to give the people living and working in the City of London the chance to come together to discover and learn in extraordinary spaces.

That purpose is unchanged, even as our audience and programme continue to expand and evolve in response to changing needs and expectations. Our founders chose the motto *Senesco non Segnesco* – I grow old but I do not grow lazy – and we continue to develop our programme and ourselves inspired by this statement of intent.

So what does that mean? Are we a venue? Or a provider of evening courses? Or a free library space where people can finish their dissertations? Or a place where a lot of singing and dancing seem to take place? We are all of these things and more.

We’re also financially independent, and very fortunate to be so. The endowment that was established to build and run the Institute and its programme has assured our financial independence for over 120 years. As a charity, we have to provide public benefit, and the financial independence we enjoy enables us to provide opportunities that are less subject to commercial pressures. Our endowment has allowed us to grow and evolve through the years, to move



from holding “lectures, exhibitions and otherwise” to be able to provide a full programme of learning opportunities that takes in short courses, workshops, talks, classes, seminars and study weekends relevant to twenty-first century learners .

Meanwhile, our special collections and archives are at the heart of who we are and what we do. As they are very strong in areas such as social and political history, protest and campaigning, LGBT history and the stories and lives of people in the East End and wider London, this continues to shape the flavour of a lot of the activity we offer.

Furthermore, music and performance continue to play a major part in our programme, as do dance, debate and research. We have a charitable purpose to fulfil, and we have chosen many different ways in which to do so.

We do offer our spaces for hire when we have spare capacity, and this assists with maintaining our independence. Many students sit their exams here, City workers donate blood here, and we accommodate conferences and away days and other third-party activity that does not present a conflict with our programme or charitable purpose.

Our independence is therefore not just financial: it’s a state of mind.





BISHOPSGATE INSTITUTE

WHAT WE DO

Creativity, learning and development in the City and beyond

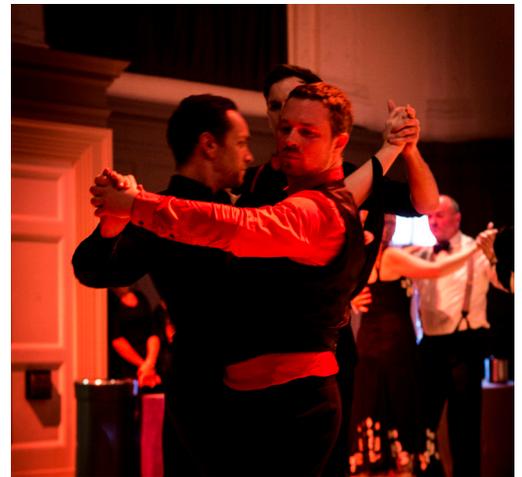
Bishopsgate Institute offers people the opportunity to come together to do the thing(s) they love in an extraordinary setting. We provide ways for them to learn and to develop and, crucially, to enjoy. Senesco non segnesco, after all.

These might be individuals signing up for an activity or event, or with a research project to do, or members of one of the groups with which we collaborate to provide opportunities for personal and professional growth.

So, what might some of this learning activity be?

It might be language classes taught in smaller groups by native-speaking well-established tutors to ensure a quality experience, or perhaps creative writing classes designed to provide progression routes through writing surgeries or peer feedback. It could be yoga classes away from the frantic city and away from the gym, or that tap dancing class someone has been putting off trying for years.

It might be a one day workshop exploring Polari, or practical photography, or London At Play in the early twentieth century. It might be an induction to how to use an archive, or referencing the graphic language of 1930s propaganda leaflets for a



design assignment, or enjoying a character development session for a show using original photographs and materials from the period. It might be enjoying the serenity and studious atmosphere of the library to revise for an exam.

For some, our collections and archives, and our talks and debates, will provide material for both informal and study and research, and for inspiration. For others we offer the opportunity to learn and sing through a West End score in a day with a 60-piece orchestra, or work with award-winning dancers and choreographers to refine their ballroom dancing technique across a whole weekend, or revel at the recreation of a notorious 1920s costume ball. For still others, the Institute is their home for rehearsals and then the venue for their performances, particularly in swing dance and musical theatre.

There's a lot going on.

We recruit experts and specialists to lead our learning, and we collaborate with exceptional professionals right across our programme to develop and deliver activity for our shared audiences. Our special collections and archives team are, of course, specialists working within and beyond the library space to supply rich content and inspiration to so much of our work and to our partners. We enjoy partnerships with leading providers who share our passions and ambitions, and our Board comprises specialists across and beyond the cultural sphere.



WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

We intend to build on our success so far and create a fully-integrated offer that meets the needs of our visitors, users and audiences and our own charitable objectives while making best use of our resources. We intend to increase the number of people coming together to do things they love in our extraordinary setting, and improve the quality of their experience at every stage. Our narrow frontage on Bishopsgate can obscure our offer, and the multiple layers of our offer can confuse and even confound potential participants. We need to increase awareness of what is possible here to generate meaningful footfall where we engage whole new sections of the public and work with more people to create a home for extraordinary activity, creativity and learning in the City.

We want to continue our role as an incubator of skills and talent, to enable emerging and established performing artists to hone their craft while offering an attractive range of personal and professional development options for a broader audience. That offer needs to be easy to browse, and it needs to make sense as a whole rather than a series of types of activity.

Independent thinking is core to who we are so our talks and debates by experts in relevant areas will continue to examine important issues with opinion formers and change makers. These, together with performances created through collaboration, will continue to explore themes that resonate with our archive collections, our heritage and our personality.

We have changed our delivery structures radically to encourage connected planning and delivery across the organisation (which means no longer working in entirely separate departments). We have defined our interpretation for the twenty-first century of the charitable objects with which we were founded (which means being clear what we will and will not do). We have identified our available resources, and where more must be found in order to continue the evolution and expansion of the programme to greater success (which means money, expertise, space and time).

We will look to find innovative channels to share the Bishopsgate Institute experience, brand and collections beyond our Victorian walls, and to increase participation in and enjoyment of our programme. There is much to do. Thankfully, *senesco non segnesco*.

