

Helping Maison Foo restructure the business and achieve a work-life balance

Formed in 2008 in Derby, Maison Foo is the creative collaborative journey of co-artistic directors Kathryn Lowe and Bethany Sheldon, both former students of the youth theatre at Derby Playhouse (now Derby Theatre).



Maison Foo creates 'mischievous' new theatre that aims to challenge audiences and tickle their imagination. The company develops visual theatre that collides the everyday with the surreal - drawing on influences from puppetry, clowning, physical theatre and creating miniature worlds.

The challenge

One of the main challenges facing Maison Foo in its tenth year in business was sustaining the company both financially and creatively. As new mothers, Kathryn and Bethany had little time to nurture themselves and develop new ideas while juggling busy work schedules.

The solution

To help achieve a work-life balance, Maison Foo received match funding from In Good Company (IGC) – a business support service at Derby Theatre. IGC is part of **The Big House** which is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The funding enabled them to appoint a freelance grass-roots producer from the region. The producer works one and a half days a week to help the team develop a new way of operating. They will work six months in total to help the company transition.

Through The Big House, Maison Foo also received four hours of coaching from The Balance Collective - a social enterprise focused on improving the lives of parents.



Bethany Sheldon, co-artistic director at Maison Foo, said:

“The Big House offers a fresh way of thinking that we found really exciting. The programme looks specifically at what you need to improve how your business operates.

“The support came at a crucial point for us because Kathryn and I had recently become mothers and had just come off maternity leave. We’re in this new and exciting life chapter but it’s become very daunting remodelling a company to help it survive. We used to work six days and ridiculous hours, but as new mothers we can only work three days a week. The Big House has been really great in helping us find the right people to help us restructure the business.

“Crucially for us, they identified what we needed to survive and tailored the business support to our needs as parent artists.”

Next steps

Moving forward, The Big House, through In Good Company (IGC) will help Maison Foo finish their new regional show called ‘**A Thing Mislaid**’. This includes appointing a production manager who will manage the logistics, planning and accommodation and devote time to making sure the show looks and sounds the best it can.

Find out more about Maison Foo [here](#)

Support Outcomes

- Appoint a freelance grass-roots producer
- Appointing a production manager
- The Big House will help Maison Foo finish their new regional show called ‘A Thing Mislaid’.

The Big House provides business support, events, grants and professional advice for creative and digital businesses in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

For more information about The Big House: <https://bighouse.org.uk/>

Supported by

The Creative Quarter: <https://bighouse.org.uk/partners/the-creative-quarter>

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