

# PERFORMING RECOVERY



SEASON'S  
GRATITUDE  
25/26

# All traditions start with someone just doing a thing once, ...

...they are constantly dying off and being created.

I like to remind myself of that this time of year. There are many traditions that I happily take part in: gift giving, playing traditional Christmas songs and mince pies, for instance. Then there are those that I avoid – office parties, brandy butter, and ... well, anything else that involves alcohol, which is a lot of things this time of year.

Just because something is traditional, it doesn't mean it has to be done. Traditions die off – often for very good reasons. It used to be a tradition in the UK to appoint a Lord of Misrule, who would oversee the revelry, mischief and mayhem during the 12 days of Christmas celebrations. Actually, I think they could bring that one back.

Every year, when I bake my first batch of mince pies, I watch *A Charlie Brown Christmas* – its incredible Vince Guaraldi jazz soundtrack really kick-starts the holidays for me. In fact, music plays an important part in my own personal traditional Christmas. Phil Spector's Christmas album, *A Christmas Gift for You*, does not get played until I finish work for the year, and Christmas morning starts with Nat King Cole and Ella Fitzgerald.

One tradition that is very special to me is when I wrap presents and play *Wink Musselman's Blue Christmas*, a collection of jazz standards sung by the late Anson (Wink) Musselman. Anson was a close friend of mine from the recovery rooms in Istanbul, Türkiye. Getting sober together, we became good friends through a shared passion for music. We played with each other often – he contributed to my first solo record, I briefly played bass for his lounge singer act, then he played drums for my indie rock band. We even lived together for a short period when I was between flats.

Anson was diagnosed with a serious illness in 2015 and had to leave Istanbul to return to the US. I left the city for the UK not long after. We saw each other again in London in 2018. Not long after that, Anson began work on his Christmas record, and he contacted me to play a guitar solo on 'Mele Kalikimaka', a Hawaiian Christmas classic. I asked what the vibe was, and he said, 'Something nice for a record people can listen to when I'm gone'. 'Don't be silly!' I replied, but Anson knew he was getting sicker. (My guitar skills, unfortunately, do not really stretch beyond shoegaze and Beatles riffs to Hawaiian guitar, and my solo didn't make the cut.)

As Anson's health deteriorated, he kept on recording. I had looked at flights to visit him, but given the state of healthcare in the US, I decided that money would be better donated to a GoFundMe.

We stayed in touch regularly, and during the 2020 lockdowns, we attended many online meetings with the same people we all knew in Istanbul. Anson passed away in February 2021. Every year, as I break from work and I start wrapping, I'll put on his cover or 'Blue Christmas' and message Josh, a



[Wink Musselman's Blue Christmas](#)

friend from the same group, who I am gratefully still very close to.

Anson faced death through a long, painful illness sober, with dignity, charm and a song in his heart. His final few years, months, then days were full of love, friends and music.

That his response to his circumstances was to make a record reminds me of the power that art can have in the face of adversity. Anson brought a community around him to create something lasting. He was not just a patient needing care; he was a singer creating joy.

But more than that, through his record, Anson is still with us – still with me. In the things we create, we can beat the ever-ticking clock of mortality. Through art, we can continue to shape the families, communities and societies that have shaped us, even long after our physical presence is no more. Through our songs, poetry, films, stories, sculptures and paintings, our voices carry on through the passage of time. In a 12-inch circular piece of vinyl, Wink's voice lives on past the death of his body – it will probably live on past mine. Every year, as I fight with paper, scissors and sellotape, his deep, velvety voice brings me joy again.

Performing Recovery's seasonal gratitude is also becoming a tradition. It's something a person did once and continues to do again and again. Thanks go to those who contributed this year – I hope you will find their gratitudes as uplifting as I have.

This year, I am also grateful to all those artists who show us that through creation, we can never truly die, and to the ever-growing number of people using art in their recovery, showing us how to truly live.

## Happy Gratitude!

- Alex Mazonowicz, Musician, Writer, Editor

*All images are stock photographs of winter landscapes from various cities. While designing the front page I realised the image is of a tram in Istanbul, the stop mere meters away from the rooms where I first met many of my recovery friends, including Anson.*

# LEON CLOWES

Musician-composer and multi-disciplinary artist, Performing Recovery editorial board member



I'm sure we all say this every year but I cannot fathom how quickly 2025 has passed.

From January till June I was lucky enough to be one of the inaugural cohort of New Note Orchestra's Key Changers. This was an excellent professional development programme for musicians in addiction recovery. 12 of us got together every month in Brighton and learnt new skills and techniques, testing out of ideas and each other, then in community settings. It's great to see recovery arts spreading this way and a privilege to be part of this.

Through the magazine I got to work closely on the outstanding production of Sean Daniels' "The White Chip" at Southwark Playhouse Borough. Through this, over 200 people in recovery got to see this superb performance and a range of knowledgeable speakers from the sober spheres kindly gave their time and energy to a series of after show talks.

The highlight for me as an artist was being commissioned by BBC Radio 4 to make a programme about my project "The Alcoholic's Tarot" which was broadcast in October and lives on BBC Sounds here <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m002kgmf>. The day that seven of us in recovery at Brighton Dome with the brilliant Kate McCoy was total joy. We hope to run it annually on April Fool's Day - it was such an affirming, funny and touching day.

It's so great to be able to meet other artists in recovery. We've gotten to a point where there's many people open to having a conversation that we're now putting these out on YouTube and through our website. That, to me, demonstrates the momentum, and perhaps more critically, that people are happy to go public in being in addiction recovery themselves. Isn't that the most wonderful thing? Is this a sign that we are moving on from the shame of stigma? I really hope so. It's an honour to be able to document that - and long may this positive trend continue!



# SUIT WOLVERHAMPTON

In this year's Winter Gratitude, SUIT wish to give gratitude to Sally Rowley and celebrate that we are honoured because she was here.

As we move through this season, we do so with deep reflection and thanks for her life, her courage, and her impact. Sally's legacy is a reminder of why our work matters and why our community saves lives. Her strength continues in the people she supported, the projects she enriched, and the recovery journeys she inspired. Her determination refused to fade. She attended every group. Every art workshop. Every exhibition. Every drama project. She owned these spaces, lifting the room with that incredible smile and cheeky laugh. She proved that creativity is a lifeline. She demonstrated that even in the hardest of times, showing up for your people is an act of power and of love.

We honour and give gratitude to Sally; a fierce woman whose courage changed our rhythm, shaped our recovery community, and held us together with her unmistakable and unique strength. Sally's memory will remain the ultimate motivation for our SUIT family to continue to create spaces where creativity, compassion, and recovery can flourish.

(Sally Rowley, is picture left)

Watch Leanne & Sally "Down the Rabbit Hole" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qHT8GlqARU&t=26s>

<https://www.suitrecoverywolverhampton.com/artists>



# SOPHIE WILSDON

The Bristol Drugs Project (BDP)

This year BDP Creative Communities have much to be grateful for. First, for still existing in a year of Bristol recommissioning and change within the treatment system. For continuing to attract new members to our weekly arts groups. To have danced to Roni Size at our sober summer day rave. To have an amazing new Bristol Recovery Orchestra conductor in Raph Clarkson. For having performed on stage with the incredible Honeyfeet, and to have had a workshop with Jess Gillam and members of Bournemouth Symphony. Mostly we are grateful for continuing to have the opportunity to make music with a bunch of incredible people who make light shine in the darkest of times, who bring togetherness and community whatever the weather, and who bring inspiration to hundreds of people every year.



<https://www.bdp.org.uk/>



# DANIELLE TARENTO

Tarento Productions

2025 was an extraordinary year for Tarento Productions, and becoming part of the addiction recovery arts community was a significant highlight. Bringing Sean Daniels' *The White Chip* to London felt incredibly special. We welcomed so many people who were sober-curious, in recovery, or rethinking their relationship with alcohol, and it was extraordinary to hear how many people related to Sean's story.

I'm immensely proud of our brilliant cast and crew, and grateful for the chance to support Performing Recovery through this work. To everyone facing addiction or on a recovery journey: I wish you a peaceful festive season and a hopeful, healthy 2026 and beyond.

<https://www.tarento.net/>



# DEIRDRE KASHDAN

Artist, The Missing Project



I was delighted that the Missing Project was featured in your special edition earlier this year, focussing on the effects of addiction and mental illness on those that love them. Beautifully produced and written, your article helped raise the profile of my work, and is something I have been proud to share with families directly involved, as well as potential funders and collaborators. The partnership built with yourselves as a result of this collaboration is something I value and appreciate.

<https://www.themissingproject.co.uk/>



# SEAN DANIELS

Director, Writer, Recovery Arts Project



I have no doubt that *Performing Recovery* saves lives. To talk about recovery in such a communal joyful way, it is the ultimate version of attraction, not promotion (but it's a magazine, so we'll give them a little bit of promotion as well). To see people thriving, laughing, building, creating, and thriving - I can't think of a better message. That people in recovery not only flourish and become the fullest version of themselves, but have a ton of fun doing it. This magazine is truly a gift to the world.

<https://www.seandaniels.com/recoveryart-project>



# VICTORIA KLIPOVA

Director, Writer

These days being sober means the triumph of happiness and quality of life both for the individual and for communities of like-minded people.

To love art is to recognise the true existential potential of humanity, and to what can have the greatest influence over a person. This is why totalitarian systems try to repress creativity.

Performing Recovery approaches individuals and their problems with care and compassion. It is attempting to create a network of mutual understanding between people with different backgrounds but similar experiences – experiences that are sometimes difficult to share even with one's closest relatives.

I create theatre work about people with dependencies. My production, *On Thin Ice* looks at the issue of co-dependency in its various forms, yet it shows how the essence of addiction unites the four main characters. The play presents exits from the cage of addiction. This thorny path is worth taking, because a person who chooses life carries within them the light of hope.



[https://www.instagram.com/vc\\_director](https://www.instagram.com/vc_director)



# CHRIS TAIT

Musician, Passenger Recovery

I'm grateful that my perspective on the holidays is different today. Where I once created reasons to use, or looked for reasons to be cynical about things that brought others happiness, I now find myself reflecting on the people in my life and the unexpected ways recovery has reshaped my world.

I'm grateful for renewed time with those I care about, for friends I've made across the world who walk this journey of recovery with me, and for a family I never could have imagined. I'm also grateful for our community center in Hamtramck, which has grown into a new, larger space – one that allows us to host more frequent recovery events and welcome even more people into the circle.

In the last year, we've been able to offer music therapy to those who might not otherwise have access, and to strengthen connection with "our tribe" through our community radio station. All things that remind me how far I've come, and how beautiful recovery can be when we do it together.

<https://passengerrecovery.com/>



# MADDIE KITCHEN

Sobriety Films, Recovery Street Film Festival

What an extraordinary year of growth! My very first as creative director of the Recovery Street Film Festival (RSFF) – and one I will never forget. The energy in the room at the London Screen Academy in Islington was electric. My heart was soaring. Filmmakers and contributors travelled from every corner of the country, bringing with them not just their films, but their stories, their courage, and their truth.

Watching their work light up the big screen was indescribably moving. We laughed, we cried, we held space for one another. Strangers became friends. Stories became bridges. And together, we created a shared moment of healing, creativity, and hope.

Standing there, surrounded by so much honesty and heart, I was reminded of something powerful: that beneath all our different paths and identities, we are the same - human, vulnerable, complex. We are all searching for meaning, for connection, for authenticity. And in that room, we found it.

Thank you to everyone who was a part of RSFF 2025. It was a beautiful, life-affirming experience. You have touched me more than you know.

<https://rsff.co.uk/>



# SUNSHINE WITCHSKI

Founder of Sober Witch Life Movement

As this year comes to a close, my heart is overflowing with gratitude for every soul, every organization, and every community that has helped the Sober Witch Life movement rise in ways I could have never imagined.

Passenger Recovery and the Recovery Action Network of Michigan have been anchors in this work. These two incredible Recovery Community Organizations opened their doors, trusted our vision, and supported the introduction of a recovery pathway that some might still call controversial. Their belief in the power of spiritual sovereignty has given countless witches in recovery a place to gather, grow, and heal.

The New Form mobile app welcomed us onto their platform with open arms, offering our message to a wider audience that was ready for a new way forward. Their support helped create a digital home where our community could find resources, community, and daily encouragement.

My gratitude also extends to the publications that shared our story this year. *Body Mind Spirit Guide* here in Michigan and *Performing Recovery* helped amplify our work and open new doors for connection and collaboration across continents.

To the many podcasts that invited me into conversation this year, thank you. There were too many to list, but each one offered space for honesty, reflection, and magick. Every host helped carry this message farther than I ever could alone.

And to Dan. My partner in both love and chaos. Thank you for holding space for the wild ideas, the late nights, the long weekends, and the constant stream of vision and creation. Your support is part of the foundation this movement stands on.

None of this would be possible without the people and organizations who chose to believe in us. I am deeply grateful and wildly hopeful for what 2026 will bring.

Here is to another year of recovery, magick, and community.

<https://soberwitch.life>



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# FALLEN ANGELS DANCE THEATRE

Fallen Angels Dance Theatre has been reflecting on another incredible year. We feel truly blessed to explore and move with our dancers as they navigate their recovery journeys, unlocking their creativity and transforming lived experiences into powerful performances.

We are grateful for all our Angels. They are the centre of all that we do. We are also grateful for our audiences, who generously support the work. Being part of a growing recovery arts community feels exciting, and we are looking forward to more connection in 2026.

A special thank you goes to Performing Recovery for providing a platform to celebrate and share everything that is great and good in this community. Together, we are proving that recovery isn't just about surviving—it's about thriving, creating, and connected.



<http://fallenangelsdt.org/>

