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REPORT

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A thankyou to everyone involved.

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& Back ground

“Puppet Animation Scotland were keen to explore ways of expanding . . . The Creative Links Team were keen to explore the use of animation as an art form . . . Kinetic, an innovative arts and street based youth project were approached as the local partner organisation best set to deliver a theatre project.”

In March 2006 The Creative Links Team met with Puppet Animation Scotland with a view to discussing ways of increasing accessibility to The Puppet Animation Festival in Fife. This meeting highlighted a critical gap in the age range which the festival catered for, having a cut off age of just 11.

As Puppet Animation Scotland were keen to explore ways of expanding their audience into the teenage group and The Creative Links Team were keen to explore the use of animation as an art form in theatre with teenagers it was decided that a pilot project would be designed which would meet both sets of objectives.

The target group of participants identified were young people from within a regeneration area. Kinetic, an innovative arts and street based youth project, based in the Levenmouth Regeneration area, were approached as the local partner organisation best set to deliver a theatre project, and by the end of April a clear project brief had been put together along with a budget. (See appendix 1)

The Project Processes

The Project Brief

Two apprentice artists, a puppeteer and an animator, would be recruited and placed at Kinetic along with a director and a scriptwriter to work with a group of up to 15 young people. The desired outcome would be a multi-art piece of theatre which would explore the theme of 'What it means to be a teenager in the 21st Century.' The piece would be process driven, strictly focusing on the participants being the driving force in it's design and delivery.

dictionary states must equal the truth, but the young people took the definitions and explained that the complex emotions they felt cannot be simply explained in a few sentences.

Young person participation

The first, and most crucial, stage of the process was to create a feeling of trust within the group. Most of the individuals came to the group not knowing one another so, in order to facilitate a feeling of unification, activities were devised to slowly introduce their varying personalities and ideas in a group setting.

Using their confessions as the backbone of the entire performance allowed the young people to 'own' the content and, as a result, take pride in how their stories were created and brought to life. The lack of linear narrative also meant that each young person had their own journey – their own focus, where they could take the necessary steps to conquer that fear, explore their thoughts on love and then honestly discuss their hates, within an objective setting. This empowered and allowed them to demonstrate how they construct meaning from the world around them. It also highlighted clearly the complexity with which they view the world and the difficulties they experience as they struggle to make sense of their emotional lives. It is this clarity and the integrity with which it is portrayed which makes this piece so much more than just a piece of youth theatre. It is a powerful statement of, and journey to, the very core of what it is to be a teenager in the 21st century.

The session began, initially, through discussing the views of the young people, on the issue of stereotypes and identities, as a means of encouraging them to engage with one another and find common ideals. The views generated, dictated the focus of the next week's session, slowly building up to their ideas on Fear, Love and Hate, as the most potent of human emotions. This worked on an organic level and allowed the young people to be in complete control of how each session would play out. Their views on examples of fear, love and hate which they feel in everyday situations, worked in a very raw, confessional way. The strong bonds of trust that they gradually built up each week meant that they felt safe sharing their deepest feelings with the group.

Collaboration

The collaboration between partners, funders and young people placing trust in their own parts of the project bred confidence from day one allowing each part of the process to grow a relationship with the project based on real needs and in line with the project purpose. This involved trust in the unknown and faith in the inherent creativity and ability of our young people and artists. The project was monitored by a line producer on a weekly basis and the full partner grouping at key points to maximise scope for learning while ensuring delivery.

An exploration of dictionary definitions of 'Fear', 'Love' and 'Hate', within the production, contradicted and amplified the feelings of the young people. The view is that what the



& Aims & Objectives

Aims

The principle aim of the project was: To create a piece of puppet and animation theatre which truthfully portrayed the issues involved with being a teenager in the 21st century from the perspective of young people from across the social horizon

Objectives

To engage young people in exploring the issues as they saw them by entering into a dialogue with them relating to – how they live their lives, what their concerns and aspirations were and how they wished to address them

To look at how the positives and negatives along the way affected the whole picture

To provide an innovative and creative way of involving groups of young people who often feel that they do not make a positive contribution to life and therefore are not valued or included

To challenge its audiences' perceptions on important issues affecting teenagers, as well as promoting the well-being and creativity, and the self and social confidence of its participants

To strengthen and revitalize the capacity of the participants to identify with the positive aspects of their lives, their communities and their futures

To attract positive press coverage for young people in an area which is so often associated with negative press coverage of young people

Outcomes

Created through interview, workshops and creative brainstorming with young people and guided by the expertise of a dedicated team of arts workers FEAR LOVE HATE was a striking fusion of Giant Puppetry, Animation, Theatre and Music theatre. It explored the issues that are pertinent to young people in the 21st century, and which are summed up in the title.

The entire theatrical experience was devised, written and performed by a group of teenagers in the Levenmouth area with the guidance and support of Kinetic, The Creative Links Team and Puppet Animation Scotland. Their stories burn with the spontaneity and intensity of the feelings which young people experience, capturing on stage in a multi art theatrical

experience, their concerns and hopes. Essentially it took the young people on a journey, into a world where looks are deceptive and emotions run deep. A journey of self-discovery, where monsters lurk deep inside, and the topic 'fear' is on everyone's lips. It was above all about the issues which young people deal with as they walk the often very fine line between feeling alive and feeling lost.

The Product

Essentially, the product was designed to aesthetically represent the views of the young people. All of the choices made by both the young performers and their facilitator, Claire Bloomfield, were in consideration of a polished, stylised end product, with hidden depths of meaning.

Having no discernable set or props allowed both the performers and the audience to focus more intently on the stories. The lack of costume changes reinforced this further and validated the importance of the performance: there was no distraction of 'unnecessaries'. The only objects onstage were the fellow performers and their presence onstage gave them all an understanding of each story and the emotions that were attached to it.

The young people thought it would be interesting to use sign language, not only as a stylistic form of drama but also as a tool for representing the

alienation that young people feel in finding the words to communicate to those who are older than them. At a time in their lives where they feel like they are speaking a different language from everyone around them, the sign language represented the barriers to communication and highlights the need to break them down and develop a better understanding for one another.

The use of animation and puppets was, initially, an outlet for the exploration of the young people's creativity; a breaking away from traditional forms of theatre, to recreate the mixing of creative sources that is associated with 'hybrid theatre'. As the production progressed, however, the benefits of using their creations as a form of protection seemed to be the real success of the show. Dealing with intense emotions such as fear, love and hate can become overwhelming, and it can be difficult to articulate

the extent to which one feels. By animating the 'monsters' within their deepest feelings, it allowed them to project an image that everyone could relate to. As a result, the audience's response was empathetic and positive, without the need for the performer to completely open up his feelings, to his own potential discomfort.

The use of exaggerated caricatures, both puppeteered and animated, also allowed for moments of comic relief for the audience and the performers. Without the intention of trivialising their feelings, it allowed for 'truth behind the laughter' – showing a light-hearted representation of something very real in their life. Many of the performers were of the view that the laughter helped to ease the truth into their parents' consciousness, without them having to struggle to find the courage to say it up front.

“ All of the choices made . . . Were in consideration of a **polished, stylised** end product, with hidden depths of meaning. ”



Case Study

Daryll Sullivan

It was his friend, Daniel, who convinced Daryll to come along to the theatre and find out more about it. They are friends at school and Daniel thought that, since he enjoys going, Daryll might enjoy it too.

“I enjoyed it the first week, but not as much on the second week. But I thought I should keep going, and give it a try, and on the third week, it started getting better.”

He enjoyed the process of bringing Fear, Love and Hate to the stage, especially learning sign language to perform in a segment of the show.

“I also loved working with the animation, making the monsters. But it took so long and, sometimes, all we wanted to do was get up on stage and practice our performances.”

The concept of discussing their deepest fears was something that made Daryll feel uncomfortable.

“I didn’t like telling everyone my fear because I felt stupid and embarrassed.

Once their ideas were developed into fully-formed, animated concepts, however, they all agreed that it was fun to see their stories being performed onstage.

Daryll felt like the whole process went smoother than previous productions because Claire, their director, allowed them to draw from their own experiences. As a result, they all felt more involved in the production.

“I might come back; in fact, I probably will. It’s just that I don’t really get along with the other group at the theatre. If I could work with the same people again, I would definitely come back.”



Partner Feedback

Creative Links Programme

From a Creative Links perspective this piece of work has been a resounding success. In being a key partner it was our interest to ensure that it delivered against the criteria of both The Curriculum for Excellence and The National Youthwork Strategy, as well as evidencing Access and Participation. It has exceeded my expectations in all respects clearly encouraging positive outcomes for young people and producing confident individuals who contribute effectively to society. The young people involved on the journey that was Fear Love Hate clearly gained respect for both themselves and others, learning to understand different beliefs and views from their own and making informed choices and decisions as to what they wanted to say and how they wanted it to be said. In this respect, 'Delivery with integrity' has been the central tenet on which this piece of process led work was developed and it has been refreshing and reassuring to witness what results when young people are truly given the trust and support required for them to really take ownership of their work. I salute them.

Michelle Sweeney
Team Leader
Creative Links Team

Kinetic

Kinetic's aim is to deliver young person centred work that challenges young people and puts them at the centre of their own experiences. This approach empowers young people to guide and shape their engagement with the work that they are under taking.

The approach to Fear Love Hate was an extension of the Kinetic philosophy in action. Young people have massive potential and this process allowed the group from Buckhaven an opportunity to create, explore, learn, compromise and develop as individuals and as a group - Job Done!

Alistair Hunter
Chief Executive
Kinetic

Puppet Animation Scotland

FEAR LOVE HATE provided Puppet Animation Scotland with a valuable opportunity to develop its programme to help young puppet theatre and animation practitioners gain important skills and expertise, the better to ease their entry into these professions and to equip them with the tools to sustain a successful career. This production provided a structured environment within which the puppeteer and animator involved worked for significant amounts of time with young people in a creative workshop situation, thereby greatly enhancing their leadership skills and confidence. Operating as part of a larger team also proved extremely useful, both in artistic and logistical terms, as both the puppeteer and animator discovered effective ways to advocate strongly for their own visions for the piece, while remaining true to the integrity of the production as a whole.

Simon Hart
Project manager
Puppet Animation Scotland



Young People Feedback

"I thought that it was a good idea to use all our own ideas for the show, I didn't expect that." **(Penny-May)**

"I loved the miming part, I have always wanted to know how to mime!" **(Kim)**

"I liked that we got to direct our own scene and explain our fear." **(Kim)**

"I especially enjoyed doing this because I got to speak about my fear of fire and it made me more open about my feelings." **(Kim)**

"We were given the choice to write the script ourselves, which I thought was a good idea" **(Penny-May)**

"I'm glad that we got the choice to do acting, animation or puppeteering." **(Samantha)**

"It has been a challenge because we had to be ourselves, not acting a part." **(Daryll)**

"I got to be myself and not just a character." **(Samantha)**

"The animation was different than I first thought it would be. I imagined it would be like Finding Nemo, but it turned out to be good, in a different way." **(Samantha)**

"In the acting I did, I think that I have improved my confidence a lot, even though I didn't like discussing my fear in the beginning." **(Penny-May)**

"I think that playing the improvisation games, at the beginning, helped to boost my confidence, so I didn't feel scared to share my views afterwards." **(Ryan)**

"I really enjoyed doing the sign language, because it is something that I've never done before." **(Daniel)**

"I thought that it was a very good idea for us young people to write the show, based on our ideas." **(Siobhan)**

"I have learned to open up, and not just keep all my fears to myself." **(Erin)**

"I think it is good that, in the show, everyone's emotions are allowed to come out." **(Penny-May)**





Conclusion

What is unique about this production is its process. It was designed from the outset to be driven by the participants and to take the risks that this might involve. It remained true to the young people at its centre, offering them integrity in their decision-making. It involved resisting the urge to 'make it look smooth' as a final production. It involved some nail biting moments...such as when it was decided that the script provided by the scriptwriter didn't capture the essence of what the young people were trying to put across, so they

worked together with the director, puppeteer and animator to rewrite it as they felt it should be. They did...and it worked... and it was the decision to go with them on that idea and trust them that gave them ownership of the piece. It was that decision in many ways that turned it into the raw, punchy, hilariously funny, poignant, captivating piece of theatre that it is.

Good Practice

This piece of work was a fine example of good practice putting into play all of the following:

It was process led and aimed to challenge perceptions on an issue, promote well-being and creativity, raise self and social confidence of participants and draw attention to the issues which are at the heart of being a teenager in our society

It was and remains a pioneering and exciting way to work, placing young people firmly in a role where they can drive forward their voices with their solutions on the issues that affect them.

It was linked with building the capacity of individuals in an environment that allowed them to identify with the positive aspects of their lives, their communities and their futures.

It helped counter negative images of young people by generating positive press coverage.

It helped build critical awareness.

It enhanced ability to articulate sensitive issues.

It was an innovative and creative way of involving groups of young people who often feel that they do not make a positive contribution to life and therefore are not valued or included. It puts their message across in an exciting and innovative way.

It developed teamwork and confidence in communication.

It created a real sense of dialogue between young people and official bodies by making a bold statement about their concerns.

It was and is an example of how the creative arts can be used to really look at issues in society, challenge assumptions and stereotypes and help young people to find a voice.

It offered an understanding of a creative arts process from start through to finish.

Partners & Funders

Key Partners

Puppet Animation Scotland
Creative Links Team - Fife Council
Kinetic

Partners

Red Kite Animation
The Puppet Lab
Kinetic Films

Key Funders

