

THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL

ARTISTIC EVALUATION - DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: TAG at St Philomena's Primary School
Title of Event: *Love Like Salt*
Type of Event: Workshop
Date of Visit: 5 March 2004

This project was based around the folk tale *Love Like Salt*. The workshop was part of a development phase leading to the creation of an interactive theatre in education performance *Love Like Salt*.

TAG worked with elders and primary 6/7 children from Pollock and Royston. The theme was based on cross generational issues and relationships. The project relates in theme to a future planned TAG professional tour of *King Lear*.

The process leading up to my visit had included a range of opportunities for participants to interact, share ideas, learn from the theatrical process and engage with a range of arts mediums.

TAG told participants that some of the work they had created would be used within the final production.

This type of participatory process provides great scope to develop knowledge, skills and interest in theatre and provide future (confident) audiences. It can also contribute towards personal and social development for participants and their communities

My visit was on the final day of the workshop programme and therefore gave me only a snapshot of the longer process.

Given that much of the work had already been achieved in earlier workshops the pace was very relaxed and the focus appeared to be on tying up loose ends. Part of the activity involved some evaluation through consultation with participants.

It was therefore difficult for me to immediately appreciate the depth of engagement and creative experience participants may have had with the process. However it was clear from participant feedback (and one teacher) that a valuable opportunity had been provided.

Two actors and an actor/storyteller led the workshop aspects of the day. There was a strong commitment from practitioners and respect for the children and elders involved.

Main activities involved characterisation and improvisation around the theme of endings. All activity was filmed. The intention was to harness the ideas and activities from the workshop for the next stage in creating the final *Love Like Salt* performance.

The improvisational activities were delivered extremely skilfully by the actors. Participants enthusiastically and confidently engaged with this process. It was evident that they understood the context they were working in.

The section that involved characterisation using scripts created previously by participants was handled very imaginatively by Angela Knowles and Ixaso Moreno.

They used highly expressive and visual methods to guide young participants in interpreting and presenting their characters. It was positive to see a young participant in one group have the opportunity to direct others in the process. All of these approaches provide large scope to hold young people's attention, interest, understanding and commitment. This is key to ensuring the build up of a strong creative flow.

Neil Anderson's group struggled with this aspect of the day. In my view this was partly because of his more literal, one dimensional approach to the script reading. By simply asking them to read from the script and not providing any additional methods of exploring the characters I felt he did not achieve sufficient engagement from the children to provide a meaningful experience. An added difficulty was that the children were reading from hand written scripts and had some problem in deciphering the content.

As the afternoon developed I gradually built up a sense that this event was the culmination of a process where young people had engaged strongly with the theatrical process (eg script writing techniques as well as performance etc).

The workshop viewed gave me a sense that the process had also offered an opportunity for young people to shadow professionals thereby creating a mentoring type partnership.

The elders commented that they could see a marked development in some skills of the children from the first session (eg more expressive acting).

It was clear that the process had also worked well in bringing two different generations together. The dialogue between young and old in terms of how they play was really good. The children were inspired by the stories of elders' childhood experiences.

The Teacher I spoke to worked on preparation pieces between sessions during class time. This indicated recognition of TAG's project providing valuable and integral educational material. She commented that she had learned a lot from the process and had also had surprising insight into some of her pupils.

Emily Gray directed the children well in presenting to camera.

Overall TAG appeared to achieve their aims in providing an arts/educational experience as a tool for personal, social and community growth.

The presence of TAG's project within St Philomena's Primary School created a real sense of community.

There was a positive interaction and mutual respect between the children and the elders and the TAG practitioners.

The focus of the artistic activity appeared to be mainly on the children on the day of my visit however it was clear that the elders had had a positive, educational and social experience.

The project had clearly provided opportunities for participants to learn and grow and develop increased recognition of their creative potential.

In my view the project also demystified the role of the artist to young people providing scope for some to seriously consider developing a career in the arts.

The project provided scope to break down the barriers between audiences and theatre/arts. Participants were pre warned that some may spot their work in the show they would attend at the Citizens. This can provide a sense of validity and ownership in advance of seeing the show. They were also told it would be OK to react if they saw their work. This can prepare them to be comfortable and confident within the theatre environment.

1.11 Was the workshop appropriate for the participants?

The workshop was targeted appropriately

1.12 Estimated size of participants

Two classes and 4 elders.

2. Management of Event

Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and by the venue. Please answer, where relevant, with reference to the checklist below adding any other comments/observations you may have.

Well Managed.

2.1 Was the venue suitable for the event?

Yes.

3. Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding (if applicable)

Following is an extract from the Scottish Arts Council's conditions of grant for funded organisations:

"The company should acknowledge Scottish Arts Council funding in press releases, at launches, on all published materials (including leaflets, brochures, programmes, posters, notices display and exhibition materials, websites and advertising). Acknowledgement of the Scottish Arts Council grant must also be made in any secondary or indirect products arising from the revenue funding such as recordings, publications, video, broadcasts, and computer programmes etc. "

Please comment on whether the above conditions of grant were met, including use and prominence of the Scottish Arts Council logo on the company's website.

NA.

Name: Angela Hogg
Date: 13 May 2004.

Advisor **Scottish Arts Council Officer**