



Mirrors

JOINT PROJECT WITH OPERA HOLLAND PARK, ST MARK'S DISABILITY DAY
SERVICE RBKC AND OPTIONS DAY SERVICE LBHF

MIRRORS

2 Sides to Every Story

A joint project with Learning Disabilities Resource Centre RBKC and Options Learning Disabilities Service LBHF.

History

'Mirrors' is the third project that Opera Holland Park *Inspire* has run with the Adult Day Services in RBKC and LBHF. The first being a project introducing all aspects of Opera to the teams, leading on to a song writing project earlier this year. The song writing project revealed a great deal of creativity within the groups and also a very positive response from hearing their ideas come alive. The workshop performance became the culmination of 9 weekly workshops run at both day centres, with both teams coming together on Monday of this week for the first time to share ideas and work together.

The aim was to create an immersive and interactive show by and for people with Multiple Learning Disabilities and the people working with them - celebrating the innate creativity within everyone and uniting everybody involved in a creative process. It has been devised as a show that can encompass the unpredictability of circumstance, such as working with a different group of people in each workshop, inviting someone new into the project, developing work already written with a view to including people with limited or no verbal ability. The project has allowed over 50 people to take part regardless of level of perceived ability.



The Process – October the 2nd 2015

Week 1 and 2 – The Teams were visited by Abigail, to workshop ideas for the story, and capture lyrics. Everyone was shown a mirror and asked questions about it following a ‘story mountain’ format. Both teams decided they would go through the mirror to far off places, to explore, to face danger and to come home safely. We began and ended every workshop with a well-known song which we have kept in the show.



Week 3, 4 and 5 – The Teams were visited by Abigail and David, to begin capturing the musical fragments. This would be achieved by reading lyrics aloud and finding natural melodic intonation, and by watching people for movements with either eyes, heads or arms and hands. This would indicate whether music would be slow or fast, loud or soft, or the melodic line would rise or fall. Very often this would inspire reactions such as sounds that we were able to capture and use, showcasing responses to people’s ideas. David would transcribe this and create an accompaniment which we would then teach to the teams.

Week 6,7,8,and 9 – The musicians visited the groups. Recognising the importance of creating experiences which were not everyday, an unusual selection of instrumentalists were invited to come to the day centres to introduce their instruments and to get to know the music of the show.



Week 10 – Two workshops in the performance space allowing the two groups to meet each other, see and be part of each other's story and hear the combined musicians, followed by a public workshop/performance.



Workshop 1

Musical run through - A chance for the musicians to work together for the first time, discuss cues and detail and run through all of the music. Unable to run Butterfly sequence as we were missing the key participant of that.

Getting used to the space, working with the two groups combined and sharing the two groups individual moments as well as singing and moving together.

Workshop 2

Ran through piece in sequence – different people from previous workshop. Worked with slides and projector to enable smoother transitions and word recall.



Performance Day

Setting up the space – spraying curtains, hanging curtains setting up lights, securing cables, finishing props, running through with slides and helpers to ensure cues known, setting up projector. Securing a safe environment. 3 hrs 15 mins

Musical run through – topping and tailing with musicians. 1 hr

Performance – key participant had been taken ill so needed to swap with another participant.

New participants came to take part.

Performance mostly went smoothly, a few moments where coordination with sequence changes and slide changes were not prompt enough, and the mermaid tail did not fit new wheelchair (and new support worker who hadn't been to previous workshops was unaware of process of scene).

Audience participation was good and encouraging for the participants.

Vocal input was high, movement was good but had been better in the previous workshops.

A sense of fun and enjoyment of the piece was high from the participants.



Feedback

Verbal feedback has been positive throughout the 10 weeks.

Performance – feedback from participants and audience filmed at the time.

Photographs show level of involvement/engagement in workshops.

“Brilliant sessions, well-planned and engaging. Abigail is really good at taking suggestions and adapting them into the activity straight away. She manages to change and include things to make sure everyone gets the most possible out of each session. Having a different ‘special guest’ each week is a master stroke. 10/10.” Jeremy, Support Worker at RBKC

“Great Session, Ziggy always likes it when everyone gets together to do a bit of singing. He seemed happy and he was quite into the mirror that we used as a prop” Darren Support Worker at RBKC

“I enjoyed it very much, I’m excited about the show, to see everyone, and I hope to be in it as well” Sian, Support Worker at Options

“I did enjoy the session, I liked the singing very, very much” Tommy – customer at Options

Overall Evaluation

Successful completion of all aspects of the project proposed.

Inclusive and accessible performance for audience and participants.

A documented recording of work in paper, audio, photograph and film documentary

Overall positive feedback from participants throughout the project.

Particular enjoyment and engagement with Harp and Trombone and the players.

Creation of a performance atmosphere and space for people who do not usually have such an opportunity.

Creating a social experience for potentially isolated groups of people.

Promoting a sense of pride in achievement to boost self-confidence.

Encouragement of team work in a creative endeavor.

Creation of a graphic score/programme for audience and participant involvement.

Creation of a new piece of music written by over 50 people.

Transformation of generic hall into 'theatre'.

The Team

Abigail Sudbury – Singer/Animateur Abigail trained at the Royal Northern College of Music, Goldsmiths College, and ENO Operaworks. She enjoys a varied career as a singer, animateur, teacher, choir leader, and running singing groups for older people.

David Keefe – Composer/Keyboard David studied piano accompaniment at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and musical direction at the Royal Academy of Music. He divides his time between musical theatre productions and education projects involving young performers or for young audiences

Kasete Skeen – Electric Guitar Operations Manager for OHP, Kasete is also a guitarist and composer. He worked with Abigail on the song writing project earlier in the year, and also assisted in a special workshop held in the Theatre, exploring sound and performance. He can usually be found planning and building the Theatre which is Opera Holland Park's summer performance venue.

Raphael Clarkson – Trombone After studying music at the Universities of York and Oxford, Raph has developed an eclectic musical career, which spans jazz, avant-garde improvised music, contemporary classical music, ska/reggae and salsa. He has designed and delivered a number of projects in schools in the UK and abroad for Match & Fuse, is a co-founder of the Be Creative Music Workshops organisation, and recently held a place on the prestigious Spitalfields Music Leader Traineeship.

Timothy Reynolds – Singer Timothy completed his studies with The Victorian Opera Company as a Developing Artist, earning a Masters degree. Timothy has recently performed as Don Ottavio in Hampstead Garden Opera's Don Giovanni, with the Opera Holland Park chorus and will be covering numerous roles at Oper Stuttgart for Purcell's Fairy Queen next year. Timothy has appeared as the Narrator in Bach's Coffee Cantata, Zen in Elliott Carter's opera What Next? and Bill Barnacle in the children's opera The Magic Pudding.

Keziah Thomas – Harp As described by the New York Concert Review as 'Stupendous...totally original and engaging', Keziah Thomas enjoys a reputation of a lively and engaging International concert artist. Working with harpists of all ages forms a major part of Keziah's musical life. In addition to maintaining a busy teaching practice from her home in Kent and performing for Music in Hospitals, she also teaches at the Bromley Youth Music Trust and founded 'Retreat to the Harp', the annual course for adult harpists.

Opera Holland Park Inspire Project runs a variety of innovative and inclusive programmes to engage people of all ages. Our Inspire teams have worked extensively with various organisations in RBKC and Hammersmith & Fulham and through various projects we hope to enrich the lives of many and to deliver a programme of activities and options encouraging and developing positive and aspirational activity, emotional and social intervention, transitional activities, as well as health and well-being.

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