



**The Dorset Performing Arts Fund (DPAF)
Year 2 Impact report – August 2020 – July 2021**

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Grant to the Arts Development Company

Summary

Impact of Coronavirus

Following the end of the year 1 grant period in April 2020 there was a delay in considering a year 2 award to the Arts Development Company due to the impact of Coronavirus; DCF launched an emergency funding programme to help the voluntary sector address the impact of the pandemic in Dorset communities. ADC had already supported applicants to apply for Round 2 of the Main Grants Programme under their first grant - applicants were awarded grants at a delayed panel meeting in the summer. In the autumn we invited ADC to make an application for £10,000 for an 8th month period from Nov 2020 to July 2021. This report details the work completed using this grant.

This grant has been extremely important and particularly in these times of Covid, when the performing arts in particular were greatly impacted by the social distancing regulations such as numbers inside theatres, and audience numbers in general. This has had a huge negative impact on all arts organisations and particularly the performing arts, as venues have not been allowed audiences, and in outdoor events, an impact on how many people can gather at any one time.

There have been challenges in terms of not being able to continue with plans, including not being able to utilise CPD bursaries for requested activities and postponement of performing arts projects. However, all but two people who were awarded a bursary have now done their course/used their bursary, and the remaining two plan to do courses in Autumn of this year. Some projects have been adapted to take place online, which has provided much learning and new skills. Some have taken/are taking place this summer (2021) with adherence to social distancing regulations where needed, and other groups are now planning the re-launch of projects.

Expenditure

- 30 days of ADC staff time used for the delivery of the overall programme
- Professional artist CPD bursary programme including bursaries and direct costs/materials associated with the delivery of the programme
- Maintaining What Next? Dorset facebook page, zoom business account for online training, direct marketing and publicity

Purpose of grant

- Support organisations to make applications to the Dorset Performing Arts Fund (Round 3 of Main Grants Programme), developing new innovative projects & performances that deliver social benefit
- Support performing arts organisations' future sustainability by providing support around capacity building and income generation
- Continue running the CPD bursary scheme for professional artists in need of financial support

Beneficiaries

- 10 professional performing artists received a CPD bursary
- 10 organisations supported to apply to Dorset Performing Arts Fund
- 390 members of networking platform What Next Dorset

Grant to the Arts Development Company

Supporting groups to apply to the DPAF Main Grants Programme

We continue to approach and negotiate with potential performing arts organisations across Dorset in relation to the DPAF Main Grants Programme. We spoke to 10 performing arts organisations about Round 3 programme, discussing how their proposals could be supported by the fund, and supporting them in the development of their applications. This was particularly useful for some of the newer and / or smaller organisations. This year we purposefully tried to expand the reach, and to ensure that organisations in North Dorset, East Dorset and Purbeck had knowledge about the programme. 4 of the groups decided that because of the impact of Covid, they were currently not in a position to apply but are interested in applying in future years.

In 2021, the postponed projects enabled the wider community to participate in, and see live performance for the first time since the first lockdown. The grants have made a huge difference and had some of the organisations not been supported by this fund, they would not have been able to put these productions on at all. Many of the organisations also went onto get matched funding for their work. This shows how important DPAF grants are, as it gives other funders the confidence to also invest in these organisations. For example, Landance were awarded R and D funding (which went ahead in 2020 using online platforms) and on the back of that, they were successful in being awarded a grant from Arts Council England to put on their production in Sept.

Organisation case study - Theatre Vivo

The Arts Director moved to Dorset a few years ago. She found it challenging to get established in Dorset, being new to the scene and not knowing how to establish herself and her performing arts organisation here, so that they could work in Dorset. Kas contacted various arts organisations, but their busyness and then the impact of Covid, meant that she could not get to meet the performing arts organisations. She contacted ADC, who met her, explained about who is who in Dorset and the different remits of the arts organisations. ADC encouraged Teatro Vivo to apply for a DPAF grant, as they could see the benefits for the theatre company and the wider community. ADC introduced Teatro Vivo to performer Charlie Bicknell and they collaborated on Ondine.

It is only because of this grant that Teatro Vivo has been able to start working in Dorset, which will hopefully be the start of many productions. The production Ondine had only 4 professional performers in it and the rest of the cast came from the community, who were given professional performance training and mentoring. The outdoor show took place in June 2021. Arts directors from various organisations as well as artists and the public saw the work of Teatro Vivo. Since then the Director has been invited to other events, so the production was a great way of introducing their work to arts professionals and community. English Heritage said how it also helped them to understand how the arts can help interpret and engage new audiences - Ondine was site specific and based on the history of St Catherine's chapel. English Heritage have since approached Theatre Vivo about working on their other sites to creatively engage new audiences and to bring these sites to life.

Beneficiary case study

One of the members of the Ondine cast from the wider community had various difficulties and initially found it difficult to interact and talk with others, especially adults. During her training her confidence grew, and she performed excellently on the day. According to her mother, for the first time she has been able to make eye contact with others and has come out of herself and seems to have more confidence to engage, which in turn has made her feel included and happier. Another parent told me they are not from a performing arts background, and so initially felt way out of their comfort zone. However the professional performers were so good that they were put at ease, had a fantastic fun time and now feel that actually performances can be for them, both as an audience and as a participant.

Grant to the Arts Development Company

Professional artist CPD bursary programme

There have been no changes to the criteria for the programme. Artists must be professional, practicing artists and live/work in Dorset Council area – grants of up to £150 to enable them to take up an opportunity for CPD to support or progress their career. We widely marketed the opportunity and supported applicants, in particular those with little experience of applying for these opportunities, so that they could convey in a clear way as to what CPD they needed and how it was connected to performing arts. 10 people were awarded and benefitted from these CPD bursaries, including those who have recently turned professional.

The bursaries paid for a wide range of training including: 'Writing for Performance'; Spotlight membership; clowning courses; a silks course; a new website; a puppet design workshop; a performance poetry workshop. The feedback from all of the participants was good, illustrating that by attending individual training needs it has greatly helped their CPD. It is a great fund for people to be able to access and there is clearly a need. Although CPD doesn't necessarily lead onto funding, this new knowledge and training will always support them in their professional future in a variety of ways.

Case study - Anna Golding

Jan-March 2021 'The One Person Epic' with Ben Duke of Lost Dog

"I have long been an admirer of the work of Lost Dog and was thrilled when I saw that frontman Ben Duke was to be running a four-day online course. Even better, the title of the course was 'The One Person Epic' which caught my imagination as a mature dancer who has long worked as a facilitator and who is now considering returning to performance making.

In the early part of the course, I was wholly thrown out of my comfort zone as we worked on spoken text. But this was what I signed up for and after several long conversations with myself in the mirror I decided to set inhibitions aside and jump in. As the course progressed, I relaxed into my voice and found the beginnings of a performer in me that I hadn't met before. This was helped by the generous, supportive and inspiring guiding from Ben who cleverly brought us into his world with his signature wit and humility. I don't know yet where I will take this work but I feel in my bones that my sense of self as a performer/performance maker is shifting and taking part in this course is where it began.

Thanks to the Dorset Community Foundation for your support via the DPAF bursary for supporting me. Here is a scratch film of my piece by the end of the course. It is very much a work in progress."

https://vimeo.com/525043397/cfdaad4b2a?fbclid=IwAR0hkBOSd_qkgBGX_gcgvYmORfi3xUEjXqn8vyyGD0eWsanngqDE4mb1_gk

Case study - Jonny Hoskin

1 year Spotlight membership

"This will be of enormous help to me in finding work opportunities as an actor. Spotlight is the go-to actors' directory for the acting profession, and an essential resource for me to reach employers and casting directors. I have found an agent to represent me but cannot proceed without Spotlight. This bursary would support me to strengthen my career as a performer, and to move more into TV & Film, Corporate Video and Commercials. I have many years' professional acting experience but the current climate is extremely competitive. I could really do with the help at this time and this bursary would make all the difference to getting exposure. This has been an exceptionally hard period financially, due to all the cancelled events upon which my household income would usually depend.

I am in a good position to be introduced to new employers, because I have part-time work with Stuff & Nonsense Theatre Company until the end of March, and I am booked for an Autumn tour. My professional development as an actor.... will enrich my contribution to all employers and collaborators, including Bridport-based Stuff & Nonsense Theatre Company, with knock-on benefits to their communities of co-collaborators and audience. This would feed into my local community through the teaching and youth work I do, as well as through performance projects."

Case study - Hester Goodman

Writing for Performance course

"The course brought together a group of women from all backgrounds and areas, who use spoken word in their practice in some way. It covered the history of spoken word, and looking at work from the Liverpool Poets, through punk and Dub Poetry to Slam and performance poetry. We also looked at different types of poetry forms, and were set exercises, and showed ways in to start writing in these different styles.

I loved doing these exercises and seeing what came out of them. They were exciting, and opened up new avenues into work. I also enjoyed the collaborative work they set – sending us off into separate zoom groups. We ended the week with a performance night on Friday in which we share our work. I came away with the seed of an idea for a project that I would like to do with local teenagers around finding inner voices and exploring shyness through words and music. "

Case study - Sammy Hurden

New website costs

"I want to set up a website in order to make my songs for choirs accessible. I would like to set up an online shop where people can download sheet music and audio. As a result of the Pandemic I have lost all my work, and I need to find a new way of working. It is not possible at the moment to run large choirs, as choral singing has become a major risk of transmission of Covid 19. I believe I would be able to continue provide singing and access to my songs and arrangements if I had a functioning website. I have spoken to various artists who have websites and they all say that Squarespace is the easiest to use for creatives. I would learn how to set up a website and how to put my work out into the wider world.

I was running two choirs, Luminos in Poole and Freedance in West Dorset which between them consisted of 140 people. On top of that I ran regular Singing Days which reached many more. If I had a website I could put out recordings for them to work with, providing sheet music as well. I could also link the website to Youtube and put up sessions to keep people singing during these difficult times. As I have spent my life working in "live" situations where I could run choirs from a piano with large groups of people, I need to learn a lot more about this technology and find a new way of reaching out to people."

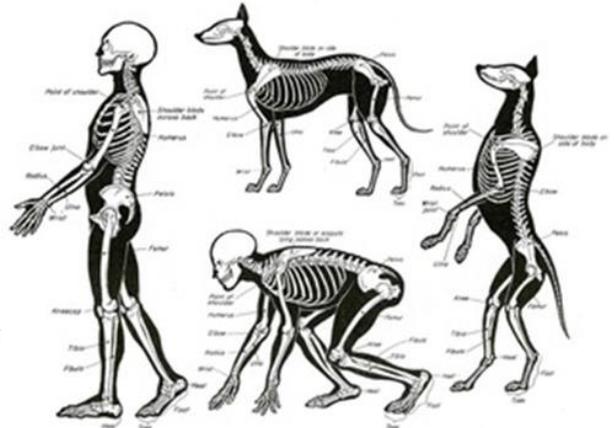
Case study - Sophie Fretwell

Puppet Design workshop

"Hello, I'm Sophie. I'm a Set, Costume and Puppet designer and maker, living on Portland, in Dorset. I recently applied to the Dorset Community Foundation's 'Professional Development and Training' bursary scheme, managed by the Arts Development Company and am incredibly grateful to say I was a lucky recipient of their support. As with most creatives working in the performance industry, I've been mostly looking forward – planning things that could possibly happen in the future (with finger's crossed!) and trying to think of ways I could diversify, as an artist. I wanted to undertake a period of research and experimentation, developing my skills in puppet-building, to create a more sustainable future-career.

I applied for the funding to undertake Jimmy Grimes' one day, online 'Puppet Design' workshop. Jimmy was the associate puppet director for the National Theatre's War Horse (2015/16) and has since worked on countless puppet projects, designing, building and directing their movement. He usually favours animal puppets and aims to capture convincing, naturalistic movement. The course was a chance to learn about his process for designing, prototyping and building puppets and it did not disappoint!

Jimmy shared that his design process always starts by breaking down the anatomy of the animal, so that he can create mechanised joints in similar positions. We also went through the different materials he uses to create various mechanisms and movements, assembling one of his 'mechanised dog leg' kits alongside the class. These kits are made out of laser-cut plywood and getting to assemble one was absolutely fascinating, it gave me a real insight into how different pulleys and bolts could be strung together, so that one "trigger" could operate several movements – something I wouldn't have been able to afford or experience otherwise.

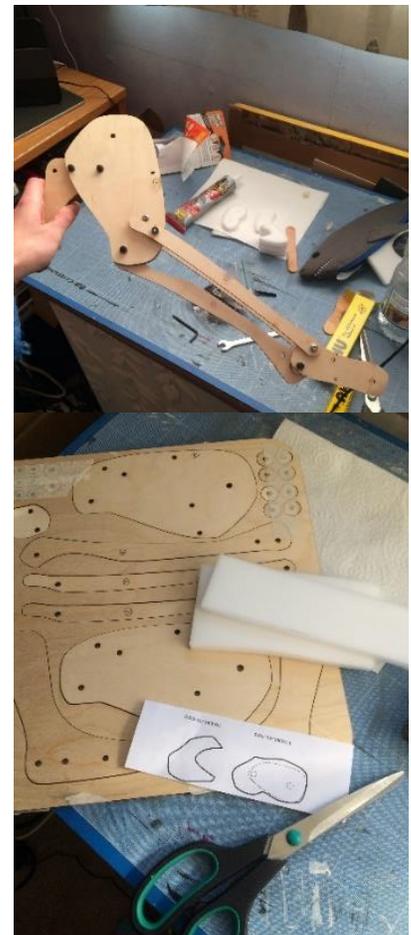


My personal goal, for the future, is to develop skills needed to create a set of tourable puppets, for a future, interactive, puppet-experience; a collaboration with my local, community theatre; the Royal Manor Theatre. Not only would this provide me with a set of assets I could bring out every season (there have been discussions between RMT members and I of developing a Christmas themed puppet-experience), helping my practice become more sustainable, it would also support the struggling RMT.

By taking this time, to develop my skills, now, I have opened up future touring opportunities for my puppet work, locally; a chance to expand my network of local arts venues/organisations further and develop my touring/production skills, which I began developing on Activate Performing Arts' online training course; CREATE: Developing Your Creative Idea."

From ADC:

This bursary was really significant for Sophie. The training has also helped her confidence and as an emerging artist. she is now getting many more commissions and is well on her way to becoming an established professional artist.



Grant to the Arts Development Company

Connecting artists and organisations

With our year 1 grant we supported the development of new network 'What Next?', established in January 2020 and part of the What Next? national movement. This is a forum for debate, networking with peers across the county, and engaging with a range of invited guests who join us to speak on issues facing the culture sector today. What Next Dorset is open to anyone working in or connected to the arts and culture sector in the county: we welcome individual practitioners, arts and culture organisation staff, local authority officers and educators.

Due to Coronavirus, What Next? Has continued using online platform Facebook. We have coordinated WN meetings for arts and culture sector organisations and freelance individuals since start of the pandemic. These were weekly until April 2021, now fortnightly, providing safe and supportive regular space for the sector (organisations and individuals) during the pandemic, including bringing in speakers from outside Dorset addressing issues and themes – Black Lives Matter, Climate Change, Diversity & Inclusivity, Arts Council Taskforce Group, Arts & Education - as well as providing forum for Dorset Creatives to come together. Meetings take place using online platforms.

We attend national WN meetings to keep abreast of national initiatives and share information with WN Dorset. Meetings are well attended by the 390 members of WN Dorset (arts organisations and artists), and have proved invaluable for networking, information exchange, partnership working, sharing experiences, posting opportunities and bringing ideas together to one space. WN sessions have also fed into ADC contributions to the Dorset Cultural Strategy.

Long Term Impact

ADC have been part of the discussions with Dorset Community Foundation board about improving the accessibility of current and future projects funded by the Main Grants Programme including funding for access costs. We chaired a meeting with current grantees to help them share their thoughts and idea on this topic with the Foundation, including Grants Manager and trustees present at the meeting. There are many challenges in working with marginalised communities as participants, and achieving accessibility for audiences. Groups were able to share with DCF how funding could best support them.

By advocating for the Dorset Performing Arts Fund, it has allowed ADC to have much a greater understanding of what performing arts organisations are wanting to achieve and how they want to engage with communities. This grant has afforded us the time to have proper conversations about performance with different people. It has introduced us to new ways of doing things, for example we can now pick up the phone to English Heritage and discuss how the performing arts can support their community engagement. The more links that are made, gives us a deeper knowledge about these organisation's current work. Therefore we can support them further i.e. with signposting, introductions, and potential partnerships.

The grant has absolutely raised the profile of the Arts Development Company. It is a great partnership to be in and together, we can support more performing arts organisations and performers across Dorset. The bursaries also fit very well with the county wide mentoring of emerging artists, in that the bursaries can add value and pay for CPD opportunities, which will help individuals to progress their careers. It is amazing to be able to support performers to further their career in this way.

Main Grants Programme

1) Landance CIC

Summary

Established in 2006, Landance productions animate outdoor spaces with memorable free contemporary dance performances for audiences from all social backgrounds which enliven local spaces and address current issues in a stimulating and thought-provoking way. They engage people by offering free accessible workshops related to each project to local schools, libraries & other organisations embedded in their community.

Grant

£2500 awarded in September 2020

Expenditure

Professional artist fees; choreographer, poet, filmmaker and associate director/producer for design & marketing. (Additional funding was secured from Activate, Pavilion Dance South West, Dorset Library Service and Dorset Council Leisure Development Fund)

Beneficiaries

3416 (16 participants, 8 professional artists and online audience reached via social media and other platforms)

Project Delivery

The R&D work supported a performance project scheduled for September 2021 and involved running poetry and dance workshops with the Dorset Library service. Due to Covid19 we ran these on zoom. The artists referred to detailed film footage of the performance route that I filmed for them and the two local assistant choreographer/producers Reuben Squirrell and Rory Armstrong and myself, gave extra information as we had visited and discussed the project on site a few times before Covid.

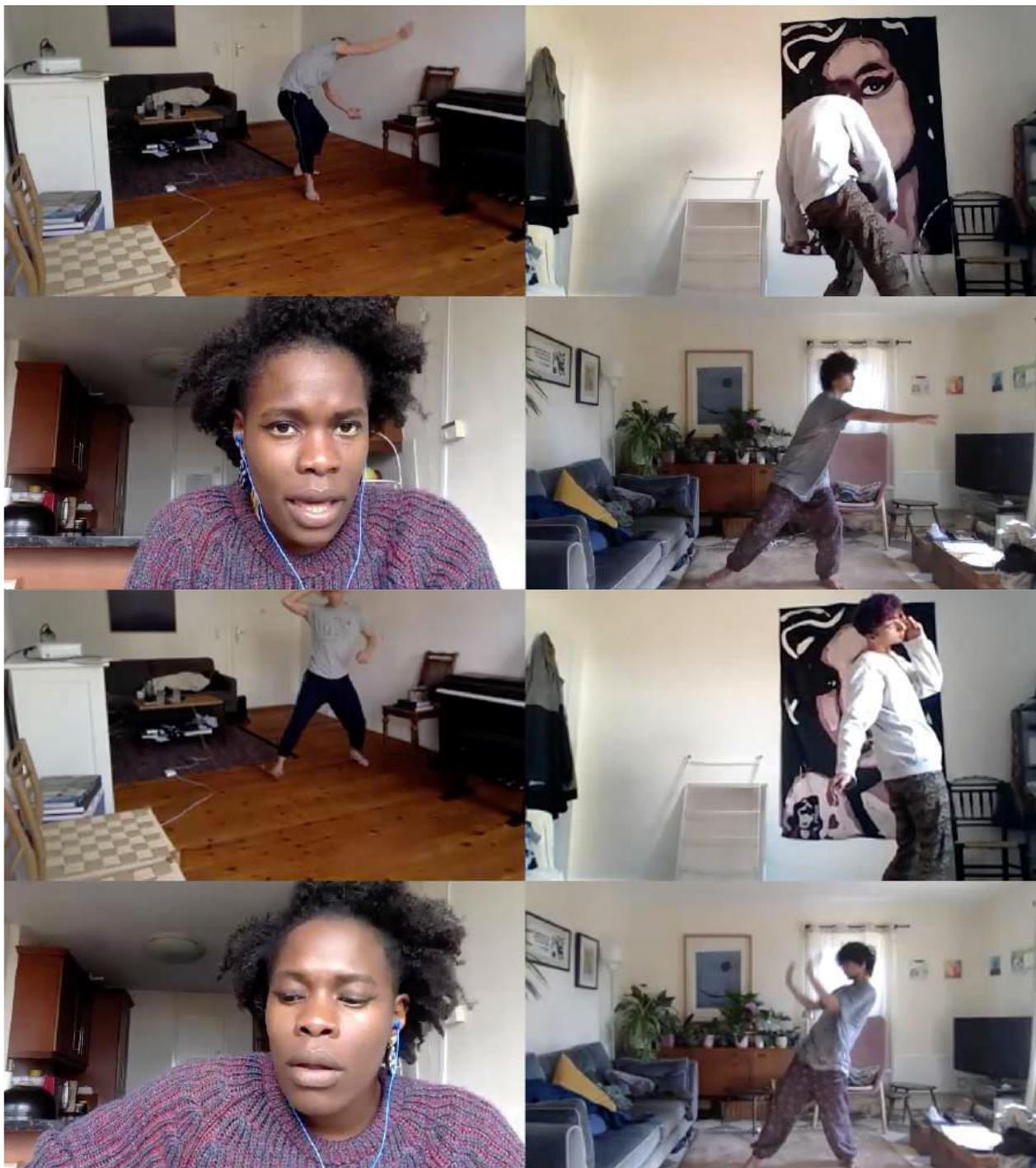
The workshops were advertised widely via online outreach in order to attract a wide cross section of participants of all abilities. We ran 6 days of morning zoom workshops during which the dancers developed a strong working relationship with Vanessa Kisuule, the project poet, and the whole team including the visual and production members worked together to develop the core structure of the performances. The sessions were extremely successful and produced excellent movement work as well as poems for the 2021 performances. The design elements were also explored through research and in sketches.

Community participants provided useful feedback including how to use online platforms more successfully.

"I really enjoyed this event - much more than I had anticipated. I am not a writer but am interested in writing. The event was accessible, and it felt easy to participate. Clearly some participants were fairly accomplished writers/ poets but that wasn't off-putting at all. The exercises/ activities could be attempted at different levels and Vanessa valued all. Being online this event was easy to fit in with my life schedule. I didn't mind using the chat facility on Teams as the method of engagement, but I would have liked to be able to contribute verbally, even if only for a small part of the session."

"Vanessa's directness, energy, encouragement and enthusiasm. Her tasks were very inspiring, and you could take part with no previous experience, exploring ways of using words and sentences to express your thoughts and feelings. I had never taken part in a writing or poetry workshop before and I really enjoyed it. I think it would have been good if people could speak their words, being unmuted by the host"

Screenshots of a collaborative session with poet Vanessa Kisuule, choreographer Alessandro Marzotto Levy & assistant producer/choreographers Reuben Squirrell & Rory Armstrong.



The work created on zoom was recorded for creative reference for planning this year's performance development plan and a short film was compiled to be shared online by Landance and Dorset Libraries. The R&D film has been shared on social media & the film of the poem created from the workshop in the Libraries, Leisure and Culture e-newsletter, circulation 16,000. The R&D edited video: <https://vimeo.com/500353175>

The artists and assistants gave positive feedback on their experience of the R&D work, particularly with reference to developing working relationships which encompass new creative disciplines. This is the first time that a poet has worked with Landance and this R&D made it possible to develop a very good creative relationship between her and the creative team in advance of the performance project this year. This was a very important process to the success of the performance project and crucial to a greater understanding of how we can intertwine our different creative disciplines within our dance performance work.

We developed a relationship with associate professor Sian Rees at the Plymouth University School of Biological and Marine Sciences, who will support the project in 2021 with up to date research on the sea and coastline at Lyme Bay and have supplied links to underwater footage of the bay area taken over the last few years by their department. This is also a new process and relationship for Landance, incorporating scientific research into the basic structure of the piece from which we then develop the performances.

Both of these developments have been due to this funding which has been a huge help in paving the way for strong working relationships within the creative team.

Impact

This grant has supported research and development for a Lyme Regis outdoor dance project scheduled for this September. The R&D funded by the grant helped plan the performance project for Lyme Regis including the creative structure and developing the working relationships of the creative team. It also enabled 3 young Dorset performance creatives to develop skills and confidence, develop marketing contacts and develop a working relationship with the Library Service outreach team. The young choreographer/ producers benefited from these paid roles & the young Associate Producer/Designer in her paid role.

It has been a privilege to receive such support for the early stages of a project and the artists, performances, participants and audiences will all benefit from the foundations that we laid during this research and development phase of the project.

An application to Arts Council England for £30,000 to fund the September 2021 project and performance has been successful, thanks to letters of support from our partners and the evaluation of the R&D work. (Dorset Performing Arts Fund awarded £1000 as match funding to help secure this Arts Council grant)

2) Teatro Vivo

Summary

Community workshops create an immersive community theatre production involving professional performers and local residents, walking through Abbotsbury to St Catherine's chapel and including participation of community choir & circus performers

Grant

£17,820 awarded in September 2020

Expenditure

The grant supported all project costs including staff time, publicity, tech, operational costs (e.g. costumes, props, rehearsal space), capital expenditure (e.g. aerial rig) and access costs. The contingency in the budget was spent on Covid related additional costs such as extra stewards, producing time (adapting the production) and additional props (due to Covid no one shared props and everything was sanitized properly).

Beneficiaries

35 Community participants
12 Staff/professional artists
240 Audience members

Project Delivery

The idea of 'Ondine' was to create an immersive theatre walk starting in the centre of Abbotsbury and reaching its climax at St Catherine's Chapel nearby. This piece of work was inspired by the Ondine myth (original source material for the little mermaid) and the legend of St Catherine, and examined what we do for love - and if we always fall in love with the right people!

The basic idea for the show was developed further by Teatro Vivo and our professional cast of 3 actors and aerialist Charlie Bicknell in the lockdown of Spring 2021. We created a framework for audiences to move around the site in smaller groups than we'd originally envisaged (due to covid safety measures) and still have a satisfying narrative journey through the piece. At this point, we knew the audience route, the characters they would meet and what roles community participants would play.

In May, once lockdown relaxed enough for community rehearsals to start (outdoors, with numbers limited to 6 at any one time) we advertised for participants and rehearsals began. Community participants worked in a number of different groups: Choral singers, musical singers and actors worked with community director Tamsin Fessey and young aerialists/acrobats worked with performer Charlie Bicknell. Between them they rehearsed to play Starlings, Seagulls, ducks, swans, wood sprites, air sprites and fire spirits. We aimed to give participants as much of a framework for their scenes as they wanted, but to allow them freedom to create their own work under expert professional guidance. We also had 2 prop making volunteers who collaborated with artist and designer Pippa Evans to create the visual elements of the show. Finally, we had a rehearsal week for our professional performers leading up to the show weekend, with community participants joining in the evenings to develop company cohesion, and to bed the show into its location in Abbotsbury.

As you may imagine, there were a number of challenges in reaching out to audiences at a time when we were in lockdown until a matter of weeks before the performances. As soon as regulations allowed, our part time producer spent time in the village meeting residents and business owners to advocate for the project - we had posters and flyers out in every location that was open, and also befriended the Abbotsbury social media administrators. Our biggest marketing tool however was our community participant group who spread the word far and wide across Dorset, enabling us to sell out all 4 performances in June 2021 which were well received.

"Loved the humour, characterisation of animals, songs and scripts were excellent, aerial hoop performers brought tears to our eyes, mesmerising. Also use of untrained performers alongside professional actors."

"I loved the circus element, the magnificent backdrop of Abbotsbury, the interaction with the audience and the relaxed yet impressive feel of the performance. It was a wonderful opportunity for local community members and children to be involved with a performance and gain such a valuable experience. Outdoor theatre at its best in beautiful Dorset! 10 out of 10 a truly magical performance!"

Impact

Here is a link to the production webpage: <https://www.teatrovivo.co.uk/Event/ondine>

All participants were asked to fill in an evaluation form, to allow us to analyse how effectively we'd achieved the following outcomes for participants: learning new skills, gaining confidence, making new friends. We have had some excellent feedback from participants who wholeheartedly felt that taking part in the project was a very positive experience:

"It gave me confidence and opened up a space for a part of me, I didn't know was there, to come out"
"It reinforced how accessible theatre can be to everyone, all levels and abilities. Totally enriching"
"My daughter was lucky enough to be involved and she loved every minute of it! What an amazing experience for her, not something that is always possible living in a rural setting."
"I think my overall confidence has increased. It seemed to have been noticed in colleagues at work who didn't know I was taking part in Teatro Vivo, but made comments about some changes in me they'd noticed; more assertive etc."
"I enjoyed the social time with people of all ages that I might not have met in daily normal life"



We were very pleased with the quality of the artistic work produced for this show, under difficult circumstances with Covid regulations preventing the whole company from ever being in a room together at the same time! Audience feedback unanimously rated their enjoyment of the show as 4 or 5 out of 5, and participants rated their experience similarly. We think this was only possible because of the excellent work of our Community Director, Poole based professional Tamsin Fessey, and circus director Charlie Bicknell, who worked extremely hard with participants to help them make work of a brilliantly high standard, whilst building confidence and creating a genuinely inclusive experience for people, some of whom had not had interaction outside their bubbles for many months. Our professional performers helped community participants to feel an integral part of the work, and were able to handle any glitches in logistics and timings during the performances, to allow the community participants to perform freely and without logistical concerns.

We had a number of young adult participants who are keen to become professional performers or creatives in the theatre industry. We were able to expose them to a number of working professionals/prospective employers, and to help them to become more connected in the Dorset theatre community. Some participants have even, as a result of connections made on this project, been invited to become part of the Lighthouse Poole's Dorset Theatremakers Network, and attended a networking event at the venue.

We felt extremely welcome in Abbotsbury: We had huge amounts of informal feedback from local people saying how lovely it was to feel the village come to life, and to see/hear bits of rehearsals whilst going about their daily business, even if they weren't directly part of the show. We were championed and supported by village social media sites, as well as the local shop, pub and tea room. A number of local people have given us the simple message: 'More please'. We were pleased too to be able to bring money into the local economy after such a difficult year: with audiences spending particularly in local shops and pubs.

Organisational impact

This was Teatro Vivo's first Dorset production, and prior to this we did not have strong links with other local theatre organisations. By inviting them to this show, we now have had meetings and made links with the following: Activate Performing Arts, Dorset Council, Lighthouse Poole, Gobbledegook Theatre, Outland Opera Arts Development Company. We also worked with local maker Tamsin Fessey who runs Angel Exit Theatre, and are talking about future partnerships between our organisations. As this production was such a success, we are now actively planning to maintain a presence in Dorset by staging at least one large scale production per year, and are developing work and applying for funding accordingly. In addition, we have long term plans for our community participants, to keep the group going and eventually run exchanges or connections with our London based community group.



3) Emerald Ant CIC

Summary

Magnificent Mill project celebrating historic mill in Sturminster Newton

Grant

£8700 awarded in September 2020

Expenditure

The grant supported artist fees & travel, volunteer expenses, operational costs, art materials and publicity costs. We raised an additional £5725 (Dorset Council, Schools, ACE £1125, South West Museums Dev Fund, Sturminster Heritage Trust) which was spent on extra artist fees and unexpected items required due to Covid19 such as tent, loos and accommodation for musicians.

Beneficiaries

270 participants; 25 staff; 250 audience

Project Delivery

The volunteers who run the mill, Sturminster Heritage Trust, had demonstrated long term concerns about the long term survival of the mill. As the main, and possibly oldest cultural landmark in the town, the mill is central to local cultural identity, a historical monument to the milling industry, and an important place for local people to meet and rest. The project aimed to engage local Sturminster children in developing original theatrical artwork celebrating Sturminster Newton Mill, an ancient working mill set in a particularly beautiful location on the River Stour. The project culminated in a community music and art event on July 18th at the Mill, raising the reputation of the mill as a venue for theatrical arts.

Art workshops

168 children from William Barnes Primary School and Yewstock Special School each attended 2 days arts workshops run by Sarah Butterworth and Kim Sibley, who planned a range of 9 artworks that would form a cohesive but fun trail on the Stour banks and weir. We used historic, rustic materials such as willow and hessian that can be found at the mill, to bring an authenticity edge to the art. The artworks celebrated the history and mechanics of the mill and the riverbank wildlife, and were particularly inspired by Hardy's poem 'Overlooking the River Stour'. Children went on a tour around the mill at the beginning of their 2 days, where they were able to learn about the mechanics and history of the mill. They sketched the mill wheels and the wildlife outdoors.





Music workshops

Musicians Ensemble Bash (a world class percussion band) and The New Scorpion Band (folk, heritage related music) spent 2 days in the schools, working with 68 children. Ellie, our Musical Director, was unable to deliver workshops or accompany the musicians into schools due to Covid self-isolation.

Ensemble Bash ran a community music workshop at the mill for 16 young participants aged 5-14, and their Mums; bespoke to their abilities. There were several children from challenging backgrounds, including a child with special needs. The group went on to perform to a crowd with Chris and Stephen at the event, and were proud of their contribution. This workshop was different to our original plan to engage parents and teenagers.



The event

The event was attended by around 250 family audiences. The artwork was installed around the riverbanks and on the outside walls of the mill. Millers through the Ages (puppets), floating lily pads and kingcups, Mice at the Mill (hessian mice running up the front stone wall), The Miller's Cat; a giant cat (walking along another wall), hessian swallows on a wire, a hessian flag and welcome entrance arch made of corn motifs, giant lettering 'Magnificent Mill' on the bridge together with spinning wheels. It fitted in beautifully with the textures and wildlife around, especially as some of it was floating in the river, some positioned at height cascading down from the mill roof to the river, and other pieces, the miller puppets, dotted along the bridge and positioned in trees along the trail.

The performance disciplines included percussion music and folk music. We provided a disabled toilet and wheelchair access in the tent. Yewstock participants enjoyed the event with their families, the outdoor trail was highly accessible. The project webpage is at <https://emeraldant.com/magnificent-mills/>



Impact

All in all, we feel this has been a wonderful pilot project for theatre arts at the mill. The community enjoyed the art trail, and the 270 children and young people gained art and music skills that can be used again for future events. Since the location provides a truly astonishing setting, all parties (mill, schools and ourselves) agreed there is plenty of scope for future performance projects.

Sturminster Newton is a cultural 'cold-spot' compared to other parts of the county. Teachers at both schools strongly welcomed the project because it brought creative opportunities they had not previously experienced and which they could not provide due to financial constraints. The project was delivered less than a month after the lifting of Covid restrictions where children had experienced school closures, missed seeing their friends, with many experiencing isolation and family problems over several months.

William Barnes and Yewstock Special School teachers told us that children enjoyed the opportunity to exhibit their work to the public and said the project inspired them towards possible bigger scale project ideas. Both schools have stated that they would like to participate in another project with Emerald Ant at the mill.

"I think the cohesiveness of working on a project with a common denominator, (i.e. a public event), is not something they do often, so that was another skill/ experience which was positive"
"I enjoyed the higher level of challenge and expectation of what Year 2 can achieve."
"Students were able to flex their creativity and enjoy working in small teams to work towards a greater whole project which they all equally enjoyed doing and found gratifying"
"I found Sarah an excellent guide and advocate of the students being independent in determining the course of their own art pieces."

Children's feedback showed that they love doing art and they learnt new skills that can be used in school and future community projects. The impact of acquiring such skills is huge in a climate where art remains side-lined in the UK primary school curriculum and many children are not encouraged to paint, draw or make at home.

"I learnt how to paint face features"
"I learnt how to make a structure out of wood"
"I learnt how to use willow, how to stick paper on structures and how to use hessian"
"I learnt how to mix colours because I didn't know how to mix colours before now"
"I learnt to make skin tones by mixing colours x 7"

Children's comments show they were inspired by the mill.

"Creaky floorboards, thick windows and beautiful wooden machines. It was a lovely place."
"I really liked it, especially the flour bag, chain and trap door"
"The best part of the workshop was putting the grain on the millers"
"It was really interesting how they make flour and 'Swanskin'"
"I found it fantastic because you could hear all the weird noises the machines were making "
"It was amazing because the water was powering the wheel"

Both children and adults recognised the cross curricular value of the project.

"I enjoyed it when the lady said it was 4500 years old because it was a bit of history and geography"
"I think the opportunity for the Mill to be linked and visited was an important community aspect - it's so central to the town and yet so many children had not been inside. "

We had hoped to bring mainstream school children together with special needs children through the arts workshops. However, we could not mix classes due to Covid regulations, so this objective could not be achieved.

We hope this will be the start of a 2 year performance project, leading to a bigger celebration further down the Stour in 2022. We are particularly interested in linking Sturminster Mill with Hambledon Hill and the Child Okeford community. Important foundations have been established through this project, through partnerships with voluntary groups and schools. Through demonstrating community engagement, we have also been able to support the mill to apply for funding for essential repairs.

Organisational impact

The success of this project led to a successful bid to Arts Council to fund a project at Walford Mill.

We are currently working on a proposal to the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) to deliver a second arts project at Sturminster Mill, building on the precedent and strong partnership work set by this project. This will engage young people studying history, art and music at Sturminster Newton High School.

We have just been awarded 2 contracts by Somerset County Council to work in 8 schools providing post pandemic explorative arts projects.

4) Marine Theatre

An extension has been agreed to July 2022.

The community play was originally planned to take place in June 2021 following a 6 month period of community workshops. However, the theatre close during the first Covid restrictions and in February 2021 remained closed, although with some outdoor performances planned during the summer.

The theatre plans to reopen for indoor performances from September 2021 and has scheduled the community workshops for this community play project, to begin in January 2022, with the performance in the theatre in June 2022. The 6 month development period from January - June is additionally important because community groups will need additional support to help them to re-engage with the theatre and feel confident to take part following government restrictions.

The groups final report will feature in the Impact Report for year 3 of the Dorset Performing Arts Fund, due to this long extension

NOTE: **Dorset Performing Arts Bursary** was cancelled in 2020 due to Coronavirus and the closure of classes and tutorials for young performing artists