



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Jackass Youth Theatre

Jackass Youth Theatre is a young people's world of drama, creativity, theatre and fun. Shows and productions are created by young people for a range of audiences. Jackass was set up in 1999 by Jack Drum Arts, one of County Durham's longest established professional theatre and community arts companies.

For the purpose of this evaluation I visited both the younger (8-13years) and the older (14+) drama groups that meet at Wolsingham School. Within the groups there were some founding members of Jackass and some young people who are more recent additions to the drama group.

The young people I met with gave me some history of Jackass, a list of dramas and plays they have been involved in, and how Jackass has helped them, and what being involved meant to them.

I hope in this report I do Jackass justice with the excellent work they have been doing. There is strong evidence of dialogue and change throughout everything that Jackass creates, produces and achieves.

When I first went into the school where the young people meet, they were all busy acting out a scene of a dinner party. They all seemed very happy and were enjoying what they were doing.

Projects

Bishop Auckland Walk

'We did a celebration event about what happened at Bishop Deer Park. It was a huge big performance'

BYTF

'We have been for the past five years now, we ask every year to go and do performances'

'We made "Clown Version of the Tempest" and took it and performed there'

'We did loads of stuff with the Tempest Production, we had to split into groups and do a musical version of it. It was so funny'

Activities in March

'We got money from the COSIP/PAYP social inclusion project and every weekend in March there were activities organised, such as graphic design, stage combat, website and two theatre trips'

Stage Combat

'We were interested in doing this so we worked with a guy who showed us how to do it. It was really fun; we learned how to make noises, do moves like throwing someone over your shoulder without hurting them'

Merchandise

'We wanted our own merchandise so we went away and designed it and we should be getting them very soon'

Halloween

'The other weekend we worked with some little children and made masks, had a stroll around the graveyard where we did performances similar to last years event which took place at Hamsterley Forest', We planned out a route for our mini performance and invited friends and family to come along. I played Dracula getting married'.

'This year we walked around Evenwood Graveyard and we performed things on rec'.

AGM / Residential

In January we are going to Liverpool for our AGM. Heather, Glen and Kay all sit on the management committee and they all went away.

Our Slavery Project

'We worked with lots of young people with special needs as we wanted to make them feel more accepted'

'We came up with our own songs/lyrics for music and performed at the Sage'

'We looked at how slavery affects people and involved children from all over'

'In the summer there was one drama and one music production. For the drama we came up with different things to do with slavery around the world'

Opportunities for Dialogue and Change/Young Peoples Comments

Firstly I met with Danielle (9), Paris (9) and Indiah (10). They are all recently new members to Jackass. They told me why they like coming and the things they have been involved in:

Paris said: 'I come because I like acting and drama it's fun and you get to do activities'

'Its way better than school, we just act, have fun and play games'

'When I first heard about it you could learn to do acting and build up your confidence'

Indiah said 'You get to meet other people and make friends'

'In the six weeks holidays, it was on for two weeks. We did drama and games but now it's more like grown up games we do. We get a choice on what things we do normally, sometimes they pick the stuff for you!'

'Laura is funny and she's got a really good personality'

Danielle said 'This is the first time I've been, it's way better than school'

I then spoke with Ellen (11), Victoria (11) and Grace (12).

'I started coming over the summer, I come every week it's really good we do games and drama.

'It different from what you normally do in drama, they kind of change it every week for you. I think that we could end up putting another performance on'

'You find out more games and get to know people'

'You can ask for games, say if you found a new drama game at school you could tell them about it and they would try it'

Next I met with Kelsey (7). Millie (8) and Elizabeth (12).

'I came because I like drama I want to be an actress when I'm older. I have already been in 4 films: Strange Dreams, Football Crazy and two others as part of Jack Drum Arts'.
Kelsey

'The drama is the best thing. We aren't doing the same thing every week which is a good thing' Millie

'I used to go to a different drama group. My brother did this older group here and he told me they were starting this group so I came along. You get to do games, learn new things and you can suggest things and then they happen' Elizabeth

'At my old drama group we would play games. Here we play games, learn things, make your own plays and act them out in front of people'

'I've been to watch stuff my brother has done'

After speaking with the younger members, I stayed for the older group and met with several young people who had been involved in Jackass for a number of years.

Firstly I met with Holly (15), James (15) and Tommy (17). They have been involved in Jackass from between 3 to 9 years.

'We are in the process of making a film; we want to make more musical dramas as we have already made our own songs!'

'The last performance we did we had an audience of 500 people'

'I have been to the Epping Festival three times now. We get to go every year.'

'We had an event to reinact what happened at Bishop Deer Park. We held a big performance and celebration event'

'For the Ramayana – An Indian story we did dances and songs to tell the story in our own way. It was a really good laugh. We went and performed at the Big Youth Theatre festival, at Wolsingham School and Hamsterley Forest'

'We will contribute our ideas and come up with performances, there's no one who doesn't want to be here so we all work really well together'

'We kind of explore different parts of things like the Ramayana we looked at culture and a Midsummer Nights Dream and now we are looking at Slavery'

'That's what kind of separates Jackass from other drama groups'

'We are really good at improvisation and there are always very funny moments that come out of it'

I then met with Simon (18), Heather (14) and Sinead (17)

Heather told me how she has been coming since the beginning, over 5 years ago. 'I sit on the management committee. We have meetings about what we want to do; like residential and different activities'

'We wanted to go to the theatres to see lots of productions. We have been to loads in Newcastle like Mid Summer Nights Dream, Banner Theatre and 2 Gentlemen of Verona'

'We asked to go to the BYTF (Big Youth Theatre Festival) and we went'

Sinead said 'A few weeks ago we did Asian art. We did things like operate Tiger Legs for under a canopy and leaves that made up a story and we went to a very big Asian Culture Festival'

The three then went on to tell me; 'It's definitely helped me as a person I'm a lot more interested in performing'

'It's definitely helped me, as before I was very shy and now I've got loads of confidence, you meet loads of new friends, like when you are out at festivals people just come up to you and talk to you as if you have known them for years'

Finally I spoke with Emma (17), Jack (15) and Savanna (13).

Emma told me 'It's a proper good way to socialise; you have fun and meet loads of new people. It's good because you meet loads of new friends who don't go to your school'

Savannah said 'It's great the games we play are really brilliant, you always go on really good trips. On Saturday we went to see a Midsummer Nights Dream in town as we had been asking to go'

Jack said 'I came on work experience with Jack Drum Arts and ever since I have been coming I got to go to BYTF.'

The group then told me 'We came up with the idea of making a film. We all got video'd'

'If there is something on at the theatre we just say and get cheap tickets for it'

'Laura is absolutely hilarious; I don't think she can say a sentence without it being funny! Julies is very good at organising things'

'In the summer I did a portfolio of our work and she helped. She always comes up with good things to do'

'It's the best drama group in the world'

'We are going to Liverpool and Hull and doing the whole abolition of slavery debate and performing a show at the end of it all'

Conclusion

In my view the young people's voices are what make Jackass Youth Theatre Group. All the children and young people I met with spoke extremely positively about the group and it was clearly demonstrated that there is meaningful participation by all the young people.

Therefore, I have no hesitation in recommending that Jackass Youth Theatre Group continues to be an Investing in Children member.

Eleanor Seed
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