

Youth Arts Open Fund Case Studies



Dundee Rep and Scottish Dance
Theatre Ltd



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Dundee Rep and Scottish Dance Theatre Ltd

About us:

The story of Dundee Rep and Scottish Dance Theatre is one of its people: its artists, creatives, staff, participants and audiences. At the cultural heart of Dundee, one of the most deprived cities in Scotland, we create and deliver work for local, national and international audiences and provide year-round opportunities for learning, performing and sharing in the community; our weekly Engage programmes provide 300 children, young people, and adults opportunities in creative expression and performance. We are one of only two UK theatres offering dramatherapy, utilising drama and theatre to achieve therapeutic goals in improving mental health in children, young people and adults.

Our model is unique-two creative forces share a home and a legal structure. Having a permanent, full-time acting ensemble is rare (unique in Scotland,) but combined with a dance company and extensive creative learning, it makes the A-listed Rep building one of a kind and a hub of creative energy. We are now regarded as one of the UK's leaders in theatre and dance production; a world-class organisation, with two artistic forces based in Dundee but reaching around the globe.

Our Project:

"The Institute of Lost Things" was an embedded, intensive, three month-long artistic residency from January to March 2024 based in Claypotts Castle Primary School in Dundee which operates in an area of significant deprivation.

The performance-based project was created and delivered by a highly-experienced creative team led by John Ross, Dance Artist and Amanda Lawson, Creative Practitioner, supported by the production team from Dundee Rep and Scottish Dance Theatre and aimed to deliver the benefits of arts, music and dance to two classes of P3 pupils.



The whole team worked in partnership with pupils and teachers in the school to co-create a piece of original physical theatre solely developed during school hours, with no after school participation. A 50 minute final production was staged and performed at the school four times at the end of March 2024, with professional stage management and technical support from the Rep team before an audience of peers, family, friends and the local community.

The project launched at the start of January with a [video](#) from Moira McFound, of the Institute of Lost Things.

Moira set the scene for the next three months by enrolling the 47 pupils as newly-trained “keepers,” entrusted with the task of caring for things which have been lost and exploring their significance. Moira made regular video appearances throughout the project and even appeared in person at the school, having been posted up in a large cardboard box as a train was on strike, much to the pupil’s very vocal joy and excitement!

As the project developed, the children together examined objects such as a rotary telephone, a typewriter and a floppy disc to discover their histories and share stories as they worked out what things to hold onto and treasure and what can be left behind. One of the key objects lost was Wilbur’s teddy bear and the children were asked to reflect on how it felt to lose a treasured possession and what things of value, and particular personal attributes, they would most miss in their own lives which they then individually shared with the audience during the performances. Thankfully, Wilbur’s teddy was found at the end of the show!



The two P3 class teachers ensured the children were fully immersed in the process and were able to transfer their learning to other areas of the curriculum in classroom activity through letter writing, designing posters and flyers, description writing and pencil drawings, so improving their comprehension and literacy as well as soft skills such as empathy.

Impact:

The project supported 47 young people facing additional barriers to access artistic and creative activities. They all reported the following outcomes:

- Improved mental health and wellbeing through participation in artistic and creative activities.
- Development of wider transferable skills through involvement in youth arts provision.

In addition, the collaborative approach led to strengthened partnerships between the school and youth arts partners.

Quotes from young people:

“What marks would I give this project out of 10? One Million!!”

“I liked doing the show I loved it and it was the best it was fun and amazing.”

