

HHBEP – REPORT BACK ON FUNDING FROM THE PARTNERSHIP

1. LEAD PARTNER ORGANISATION NAME: Hoxton Hall

2. PROJECT TITLE: It Happened Here

3. PROJECT DELIVERY:

The project brief was to facilitate a devised heritage-based site-specific performance, with script, authored by young people (aged 12-19) and delivered to audiences on a performance day at the Geffrye Museum. The brief also specified the production of an archival record of the process, with accompanying photographic documentation of the performances.

The first requirement was met on Saturday, July 25th at the Geffrye Museum. Three young people delivered three performances (12noon, 2 and 3pm) to 34 members of the public. (The project had recruited seven participants, two of whom were inconsistent attenders, and two of whom succumbed to Swine Flu in the week of the performance. The last two performances were oversubscribed.

Participant details are as follows:

- **Gender:** **Female (5)** **Male (2)**
- **Ages:** **13 (3)** **14 (1)** **15 (2)** **17 (1)**
- **Resident in:** **Hackney (4)** **Leytonstone (2)** **Islington (1)**
- **Ethnicity:** **White British (2)** **Black Carribean (2)** **Black British (1)**
 Other –“Mixed Race” (1) **Other –“Mixed White and Asian” (1)**
- **Disabilities:** **None (5)** **Dyslexic and Dyspraxic (1)** **Muscular Dystrophy (1)**

All participants' Guardians signed their full consent for images taken during the process to be used for publicity and marketing purposes.

The thirty-five minute performance took the form of a promenade or tour piece, following a prescribed route, and involved a top-hatted Guide, singing in the Chapel, improvisation in the Almshouses, and storytelling in the Garden Reading Room and Herb Garden. The performance ended with audience members being invited to join the cast for a Lemon Verbena cocktail (sourced from the Herb Garden), and to discuss the performance, which many took the opportunity of doing. Elizabeth Kaye

(LOCOG) attended the first performance and spent time with the performers afterwards, and has asked to be kept informed of future IHH performances.

The audiences were generally enthusiastic about the performances, especially those with no previous knowledge of the Geffrye –comments can be read in the accompanying Audience Summary.

The performance was extensively photographed by Rob Baker-Ashton, a professional freelance photographer with wide experience in documentation and the performing arts. His photographs will be forwarded, and he will be invited to document future processes.

The second requirement (the archival record) will be finished by the second week of August, and will form a complete written and visual record of the process, such that the performance can be repeated by other groups in the future, as required.

(i) *Project Management*

Although the project/performance was delivered on time and within agreed parameters there is room for improvement. Evaluation feedback from Gemma Gottelier (who co-ordinated the project for the Geffrye) and Janine Marsh (a freelance practitioner who assisted with process delivery) has identified the following as needs for the host partner, to be met by project management:

- More logistical information, and earlier; especially concerning the Budget
- Clearer delivery guidelines, and earlier
- Firmer implementation of delivery plan
- More participant team-building, and earlier
- More performance exercises.

Hoxton Hall's role as lead Partner was generous and efficient (at hosting my Project Management), both in providing me with office space and Outlook facilities for working off-site, and for Hayley White's input and leadership throughout.

An IT breakdown at Hoxton Hall unfortunately happened during the marketing, recruitment and early phases of delivery.

In future phases of the project the marketing of the performance day can benefit from firmer management: this needs to be targeted as carefully as the marketing for participants in the project. Effective canvassing on the day ensured the Geffrye performances were well attended, but this can't be taken for granted elsewhere.

(ii) *The role of partners*

The Geffrye Museum staff were welcoming and accommodating throughout the process.

For what, in this context, has been a pioneering process (the introduction of promenade performance to the Museum), there has been remarkably little friction.

Improvements in partnership working and communication could have been:

- Responsive and clear information on timetabling and venue availability
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities, and cost implications.

Benefits from partnership between Hoxton Hall and the Geffrye Museum include:

- The Geffrye Museum staff on duty for the performance day were enthusiastic, professional and well-briefed, and ensured the day passed smoothly
- The performance day was a great success and pioneered the use of the Geffrye Museum for promenade performances
- The two organisations raised the profile of the project and the organisations individually by being part of the Cultural Olympiad Open Weekend event and attracting a LOCOG visitor
- Sharing and learning the creative process of site-specific research and response for performance.

The project demonstrated the ongoing commitment to partnership working and the HHBEP by the Geffrye Museum and Hoxton Hall, united by a strong creative process-led project that inspired and directed both partners to work successfully together. I hope that this can be recreated through IHH with other HHBEP partners.

(iii) *Delivery*

Delivery as measured by final performances was a success. The audience were exposed to a variety of historical-based interpretation, information and environments. Different performance modes devised by the young participants, engaged the audience on different levels with the Museum's heritage.

Although the performance was a success, the process could be improved in future phases by more use of structured heritage enquiry exercises, and increased contact time to create more momentum for the participants and improve the standard of performances.

The young people participating in the project were talented, and made for a good mix of writers, singers and actors, and acquitted themselves well on performance day (see Section 5 for their evaluation of the process).

Where process delivery is supplemented with structured team-building exercises the sense of ownership (vital to devising processes) will be strengthened in the participants, and the poor timekeeping and motivation apparent in some of them can be minimised.

As the next phase of the project (at Hoxton Hall) is mooted to be an intensive (week long) version of the process, a stronger delivery outline needs to be developed, with a clear set of objectives leading to the performance communicated to the participants, both at the outset of the project, and as it unfolds.

(iv) *Marketing*

The initial Project Marketing Flyer was visually arresting, however feedback from young people involved in this and other projects at the Geffrye indicate that they found it confusing and uninformative. Although a paid door-to-door drop of 1,000 flyers was made in Hoxton and Haggerston, there was no response from the public.

Mention of history and heritage in project marketing will in future be relegated in favour of the term *creative research*, and introduced at key points of the devising process, clearly targeted towards script production.

Marketing will need to be directed at Hackney Schools, make more use of databases and certify the delivery of flyers to homes in the local community.

An expedient use of leftover flyers was discovered during the process by affixing stickers on them announcing:

- “Come and see the show” (followed by contact details), sent out to the Geffrye Mailing list a couple of weeks before the performance day, and
- “Performance this Saturday” (followed by times of performances and contact details), left in information areas in the Geffrye.

I was told it was not possible for front desk staff to hand these out directly at the Geffrye in the run-up to performance day –this would have been useful, and could have signed audience members up in advance of the day, easing pressure to recruit audience members on the day.

(v) Budget

Whilst there was some confusion over management of the Budget this has now been clarified and resolved.

A clearer Budget breakdown will in future be factored into the project agreement.

4. YOUR AUDIENCE:

Total for the project: **34**

How many were adults? **26**

How many were children or young people (up to 25 years)? **8**

What was the ethnic background breakdown?

- White British (**21**)
- Black British (**4**)
- Other white (**3**)
- Asian, Pakistani (**2**)
- Mixed White + Black Caribbean (**2**)
- Mixed White + Asian (**1**)
- White European (**1**).

5. PLEASE DESCRIBE ANYTHING YOU HAVE LEARNED FROM THE PROJECT THAT YOU COULD PASS ON TO OTHER PARTNERS

A post-performance evaluation discussion with the participants produced the following observations, which might prove useful to other projects.

When asked about positive aspects stemming from the process, participants noted

- Open access to the Museum, in devising and performance
- Being taken care of on performance day, with generous facilities for changing and resting between performances
- Feedback from Geffrye staff on devising and performance.

When asked about negatives, participants wanted

- More participants (ten was quoted as the ideal number)
- More practical resources (handouts, use of the internet to pursue aspects of research for performance narratives)
- More practical exercises directly targeted at devising performance.

When asked what they had gained from the project personally participants detailed

- Increased confidence
- Greater appreciation of heritage in general, and at the Geffrye in particular
- Devising and performance skills.

When asked what had detracted from the project participants identified

- Some group members' lack of motivation and concentration, affecting the whole group's concentration and momentum
- Some group members' lack of punctuality
- Not enough refreshments.

Responses to these points appear throughout this Report.

6. WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THE PROJECT AS SOMETHING THAT YOUR ORGANISATION OR THE PARTNERSHIP COULD DEVELOP FURTHER?

Yes.

Conan Lawrence

10th August, 2009