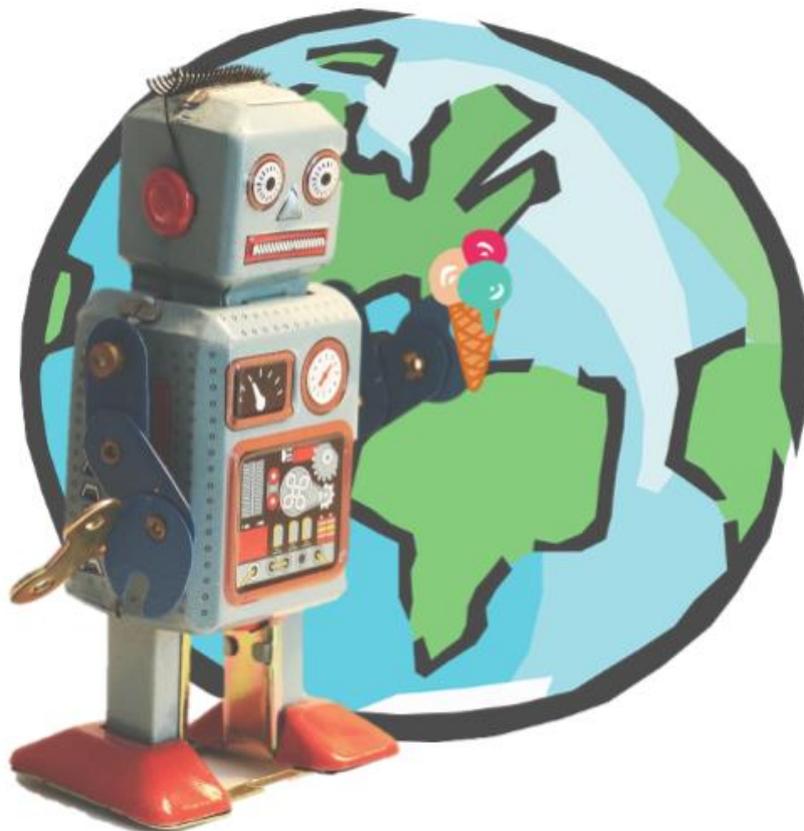


Summer Breakout 2019
 Perfectopia  



Friday 2nd August
3pm

Summer Breakout 2019: Perfectopia

Project Summary

In this year's Breakout project, young people staged an adaptation of 'Perfectopia' by Mara Zvakou. The play explores the conflict between human creativity and the role of technology, where an evil President turns citizens into robots in a quest to seek perfection. Young people enjoyed exploring these themes, devising their own scenes and choreographed sequences in mini ensembles of 'Gardeners', 'Writers' and 'Painters'. They engaged extremely well with this and particularly enjoyed activities which allowed them to consider what would make their own ideal world – their own 'Perfectopia'.

The project took place from 29th July-2nd August at the Wally Foster Community Centre, welcoming 31 young people aged between 5 and 13. Nadya Bettioui led the project in a production role, with practitioner Molly Bater as the Lead Director and Hannah Drummond and Stephen Kyem supporting as co-directors. Molly and Stephen were both personally recommended by the playwright. Molly brought a wealth of experience to the project, having previously been involved in a production of 'Perfectopia'. She was able to work with Maria to create an abridged version of the play suitable for our cast. The team was supported by two experienced Peer Facilitators, Maria Coker and Corban Lewis. In addition, we were lucky to have two volunteers for the week – Gina Harbour, a placement student from East 15 and Montell Pemberton, a recent work experience student.

This year we were unable to source a Designer in time for the project, however, this enabled us to draw upon the design expertise within the team whilst at the same time recouping some of our budget. The result was a striking background designed by Gbenga Olopade, our Training Coordinator. The backdrop featured hand prints from all members of the cast, literally putting their own 'stamp' on the design. Young people seemed to enjoy this and valued the opportunity to contribute to the design. We were also able to re-use some of the set from a recent project with our *Theatre Exchange* programme. Nadya coordinated the other design aspects such as costumes and props, with the support of the office team. The result was a coherent design which drew together all of the main themes and allowed young people to take an active role, which included designing their own t-shirts.

The project culminated in a wonderful show on Friday 2nd August, with approximately 40 audience members.

Key Aims of the Project

- Support young people in developing social skills, confidence, team working and listening skills
- Develop young people's artistic skills in both performance and design
- Create a final performance which is inclusive and allows space for young people's voices and ideas to be expressed.



Impacts & Outcomes

According to the Goal Setting forms completed by young people...

- 85% felt that they made friends their own age
- 80% felt that their acting had improved
- 90% had fun
- 90% felt an improvement in their confidence
- 84% felt that they had shared their ideas and worked as part of a team compared to 50% of participants who aspired to do so at the beginning of the project.
- 89% felt that they were more able to help others compared to 58% at the beginning of the project.
- 58% felt that they were more able to understand their feelings at the end of the project compared to 38% at the beginning.
- There was a 41% increase in the average 'life satisfaction' score on the cantrils ladder at the end of the project compared to the beginning.

Support young people in developing social skills, confidence, team working and listening skills:

At the beginning of the week, the team quickly identified that many of the young people needed a considerable amount of support with developing the above skills, especially as the average age of our participants was 7 years old. Therefore, the team established a set of 'agreed ways of working' with the young people at the beginning of the week focusing on aspects such as 'speak one at a time' 'help each other' and 'be kind to each other'. This was an effective tool as staff and young people began to refer back to this document as a way of reinforcing these skills. As a result, we witnessed an improvement from the majority of the participants. To support young people with their listening skills, the team developed a call and response clapping rhythm which the young people repeated back. This was used consistently throughout the week and helped to ensure that that we were not raising our voices and role modelling calm behaviour for the young people. This method was useful for the majority of the time for encouraging swift and effective listening skills.

Staff observations carried out at the beginning and end of the project showed an increase in participants behaviour, health and wellbeing from an average score of 11.5 to an average score of 15 (out of a possible 25).

Develop young people's artistic skills in both performance and design:

Many of the young people had not taken part in Drama activities before. This presented some challenges as we had a short space of time to help them develop these skills. However, we discovered that many of the young people had a natural flair for performance and enjoyed acting which was very advantageous. For those who found it more challenging, we used a large variety of games to help discreetly build performance skills and confidence in performing in front of others. This was effective as framing performing skills within 'games' helped the young people to become more expressive throughout the week resulting in them eventually being able to transfer these skills into the play.

The collaborative and interactive nature of the set backdrop construction enabled all young people to take active roles as 'designers'. Young people enjoyed this process, especially the process of dunking their hands in to trays of paint! Young people also enjoyed designing their own T-shirts which reflected their own interpretations of their characters. Each young person was given a head band to wear featuring a symbol which represented their character. Unfortunately, there wasn't enough time for all young people to help make these, however,

two young people who found it difficult to engage in rehearsals, helped to design and make these for the rest of the cast.

Staff observations carried out at the beginning and end of the project showed an increase in in Performance and artistic ability from an average score of 9 to an average score of 11.5 (out of a possible 25).

Create a final performance which is inclusive and allows space for young people's voices and ideas to be expressed:

Our participants presented a wide range of varying needs and abilities. Although not stated on their registration forms or perhaps not formally diagnosed, many of the young people displayed common features of attention deficit disorders and other special educational needs. Managing this was challenging at times, especially as many of the participants were new to Immediate Theatre and we did not have the established relationships with them that we often rely upon to manage behaviour and ensure inclusivity. However, I feel that the team were mainly able to quickly establish positive relationships with the young people and understand their needs so that we could implement appropriate strategies to ensure they were included in the process as much as possible. In addition, the team was split into 3 groups who worked with the same young people throughout the project, this meant that the staff got to know the young people well and were able to closely listen to their ideas and place them in roles which matched their needs and aspirations. The team established before the project that we would all aim to minimise any 'time out' that young people spent outside of the main space unless they self-referred. On the whole, this worked well as there were 3 young people who mainly made use of the 'Time Out' provision. Unfortunately, one young person chose not to perform in the final show, this was a shame as staff had tried to encourage him throughout the week to take part and he had performed in previous years. This young person had a challenging few days leading up to the performance day. However, we identified that he preferred designing to performing, so we encouraged him to make his own 'mini robot' to display as part of the set. He also helped to design other aspects of the set and costumes.

Although we were working from a script, the Directors chose not to assign individual lines to the young people in favour of a more devised approach where young people could decide on the dialogue as long as it was in-keeping with the plot. Young people also devised their own movement sequences and chants with support from the facilitators. This approach ensured that young people's voices and ideas were expressed throughout.

Project Highlights

- Compiling a staff team at short notice during a time of pressure on the delivery team.
- Welcoming so many new participants to the project who will hopefully join our EBYTs. Despite the fact that they were new to Immediate Theatre, we were still able to quickly build effective relationships with them.
- Individual group choreography, working in mini ensembles to create their own group identity
- Design elements came together well despite not having a designer, with young people taking an active role
- Providing refreshments at the end of the project provided an added reward for young people
- The cohesive way the team worked together and supported each other, especially seeing as some team members were new to Immediate Theatre and the project. This was also

impressive despite working with such a large number of very young participants, some of whom had very challenging and complex needs

- Witnessing the progress of individual participants who went on a real journey throughout the project. For example, one girl who was very disruptive at the beginning of the project, but then went on to excel in the main role, showing an impressive level of commitment, dedication and maturity. Another example is a boy who found it very difficult to engage and communicate at the beginning of the project, but gradually improved until he was able to fully take part and enjoy the final performance. At the beginning of the week, he stated that he didn't care or want to take part in the play, but at the end of the week, he brought in a suit to wear for the performance and was extremely proud and happy to take part.
- Having a pre-prepared script to work from was an improvement on last year as it meant that less time was spent on generating ideas at the beginning of the week.
- The feedback from parents throughout the week and following the show was extremely positive. Many parents and carers commented on how much their children enjoyed the project and how helpful the project had been for them in terms of providing much needed free childcare during the summer holiday.
- All staff attended the training session

"One specific girl can usually be very challenging in our EbYT sessions, but in Breakout she really matured and committed. She learned her lines, took it seriously she and really excelled. Hopefully she can now transfer these skills to her regular EbYT sessions" **Charmain Humphrey, Participation Manager**

"[A highlight] was seeing the progression of the children from Monday to Friday. They each grew in confidence, performed in a role and found positive ways of working as a team" **Molly Bater, Lead Director**

"Multiple times throughout the week I saw challenging young people overcome many issues and challenges, which was extremely positive to see" **Gina Harbour, Facilitator**

"Watching the group come together as a mini company through supportive and positive actions" **Hannah Drummond, Co-Director**

"[A highlight was] seeing the young people have their moment in the spotlight to shine and seeing the journey a lot of them have been on, both personally and artistically" **Nadya Bettioui**

"[A highlight was] seeing the young people performing. Also, certain young people were able to pull it together and calm themselves down whereas they haven't been able to do this in previous years" **Charmain Humphrey, Participation Manager**

"X really monitored his behaviour compared to the start and PERFORMED. X really highlighted maturity and confidence towards the end of the week" **Hannah Drummond, Co-Director**

Audience Feedback

A total of 40 audience members attended the final performance, which was a great turnout and created a supportive, warm atmosphere. Audience members were mainly parents and carers, many of whom verbally expressed to the team how much their child had enjoyed the project. One parent commented "He [my son] keeps asking if he can come back for a second week as he has enjoyed it so much". It was a fantastic opportunity for us to engage with

families who are new to Immediate Theatre and keen to carry on engaging with us in the Autumn term. Many parents and carers said that they had heard about the project through a local newspaper feature listing [Young Hackney's summer activities](#). From the audience feedback forms received, 100% rated the show as 'very good' or excellent'.

Quotes from audience members:

"Amazing what was achieved in one week"

"Nice to see all the children, involved. The staff were great, keeping them on track"

"Brilliant show, cannot believe it was done in a week"

"It was good, I was surprised at how much was accomplished in a week"

"My daughter loved Immediate Theatre and attends the Kingsmead session every week"

"Both [of my children] really engaged in the experience and especially the final performance"

"Very good and they liked the play. They would like to join again next time."

"[My son] really liked taking part"



Lessons Learnt

- Clearer and more robust procedures for dealing with challenging physical behaviour which becomes a health & safety risk to other participants and staff members. This is due to be reviewed and discussed as a team ahead of the Autumn term.
- 1-1 'time out' provision more consistently managed by one staff member in order to relieve pressure from the Front of House Staff and staff team trying to supervise other young people.
- Provide more activities for young people to do outside in the playground to keep them more occupied
- More emphasis on behaviour management in the training session so that the less experienced staff are more prepared for this.
- Organise the staff team earlier. Due to unforeseen and unfortunate personal circumstances within the team, the staff team was confirmed very close to the start of the project which did not allow enough time for properly planning and scheduling the project.
- More consistent and thorough approach to employment of staff. One member of the team was employed in haste without fully considering whether we he would be suitable for the project, this led to issues throughout the week.
- Plan the concept/ theme of the production further in advance. The decision felt rushed and the script wasn't entirely fit for purpose before the project.
- Improved communication with the venue. At times, it was very difficult to gain assistance and support from the venue staff. It emerged that the staff were happier to liaise directly with Charmain on all matters. Once this was established, communication became easier and our requests were dealt with, however, it would have been helpful to establish this at the beginning. Next year, perhaps there should be a more formalised contract in place.
- Asking the audience directly for donations at the end was a great approach- next time, a young person could accompany the peer with the bucket.
- The Marketing & Administration Intern should be invited to the training so that they fully feel part of the team and are aware of their responsibilities (which may include supporting young people).
- Raise the minimum age of the project to 6 years old, some of the participants this year were far too young and required too much 1-1 support.
- Promotional flyers need to be produced much earlier (end of June) and designed in-house.

*"I think a staff member should be in the time out zone to have consistency for the children that struggle to participate" **Molly Bater, Lead Director***

*"The discussion on safeguarding and behavioural management was very useful. I think we should have info on any specific child that may need a particular strategy in place" **Molly Bater, Lead Director***

Staff Team

The staff team was confirmed at short notice, with the training session taking place the day before the project started. This placed some undue pressure on certain members of the delivery team, however all members of the team attended the training and on the whole, worked well together with a shared passion for achieving the outcomes of the project. Briefing and de-briefing sessions were held at the start and end of each day.

The team were:

Nadya Bettioui- Youth Drama Coordinator/ Producer
 Charmain Humphrey- Participation Manager
 Molly Bater- Lead Director
 Hannah Drummond- Co- Director
 Stephen Kyem- Co-Director
 Maria Coker- Peer Facilitator
 Corban Lewis- Peer Facilitator
 Gina Harbour- Placement student from East 15/ Facilitator
 Montell Pemberton- Peer Facilitator

"I think the team worked well and supported each other. At times it was difficult trying to deal with some difficult participants and support the team, but this was discussed and I think improved upon" **Gina Harbour, Facilitator**

"The team did everything they could to give young people a great experience" **Charmain Humphrey, Participation Manager**

"We all tried our best and were there for each other. We were all supportive. We made sure we all got lunch breaks" **Maria Coker, Peer Facilitator**

"The team always listened to each other, helped each other. Felt very supportive. I had trust in the team to support me throughout the process" **Molly Bater, Lead Director**

I think the team worked together extremely well, a lot of the issues we found I believe to be because there was a large amount of participants who were new to Immediate Theatre, and this couldn't have been helped" **Gina Harbour, Facilitator**

"[I was able to] bring a team together at quite short notice and developed a mainly cohesive, supportive team who were punctual, reliable and professional. On the whole, the team was extremely dedicated and committed to the show" **Nadya Bettioui**

