

# The Promise

A collaborative pilot project  
Evaluation Report



Global Music Visions C.I.C.



FILM-MAKING FOR EVERYBODY!

Funded by the Arts Council's Let's Create Jubilee Fund from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Foundation (HIWCF) – ensuring that creativity played an important role in local community celebrations for Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Using the speech made to the Commonwealth by Princess Elizabeth on her 21st birthday, the grant facilitated a pilot collaborative project supporting the Red Sauce Inclusive Theatre group cast to access and engage with parts of theatre production process, and to perform to both live and on-line audiences. Four social enterprises working together enabled all aspects of physical theatre, sounds and film footage to be experienced and evidenced, creating a unique piece of theatre, expressing the words, motives, and philosophies of "The Promise" made by the then Princess Elizabeth, combined with a locally written poem about the experience of a young woman meeting the Princess.



The cast were from Red Sauce Inclusive Theatre, a diverse group of adults with learning and physical disabilities, who were joined by three professional actors. Global Music Visions C.I.C. supported the cast to engage in creating and recording narration and backing tracks for the performances. Film Crew 4U CIC created film footage, engaging the cast with filming, promoting the performances by producing short videos of the rehearsals for social media and recording the main performance, all of which provided film evidence for evaluation purposes. Owl XL CIC facilitated evidence capture of social outcomes and evaluation of the social impact.

There was only time for 10 rehearsals prior to the main performance at Portsmouth's Guildhall. One of these was an open rehearsal held at the National Museum for the Royal Navy, where other organisations, friends and family were invited to join us to experience the learning process. The development journey throughout the project was chronicled by 9 bite sized videos, an introduction video played before the main performance and the main performance itself was filmed for future training purposes.

## Social Impact of The Promise Pilot Project

### The overall aim of the project was:

To develop onsite collaborative working practices that enables SEND and disabled participants, as well as the CIC partners involved, to openly experience the whole production process and celebrate with their audience the joy of being diverse and working together to be creative.

### Objective 1: Experiential Learning

*'Guided by the lived experience of the collaborating partners, to create a safe flexible and experiential learning environment suited to the diverse learning abilities of all the people involved.'*

Each of the partners run their social enterprises as the result of lived experience, leading to an open-minded approach where tolerance, understanding and acceptance were at the core of all that was done. The project was totally experiential for everyone involved, adapting as creative ideas were developed from contributions resulting from the creative open environment. Feedback from the open rehearsal highlighted the enjoyment of everyone taking part, everyone's involvement, how well everyone interacted together and how surprised the audience were to see how the scene took shape as the rehearsal progressed.



## Objective 2: Collaborative Working

*'Pilot working practices where all collaborating partners are active onsite, rather than working in silos to carry out their role, to raise awareness amongst all involved of the variety of skills and techniques used to create a production.'*



Openly working side by side, rather than our own individual workspaces, everyone learnt a lot about each other. The partners were all known to each other from previous projects, but this was the first time of physically working in the same space, openly seeing how each other operated.

Working this way helped the whole group experience what was involved in staging a performance. It was commented on by one of the cast that we were more professional than other drama groups he had attended as he was able to experience how the backing track came together and how it was all captured on film.

The disadvantage was that we were working to a very tight deadline. Had we have had more time, we would like to have developed the opportunities our onsite breadth of skills offered the whole group to experience, such as music, recording workshops and filming workshops.

## Objective 3: Diversity of Skills

*'To encourage exploration of the diverse skills being used, so that participants can identify the production areas they are interested in to inform their own progression routes in the arts.'*

Posture, movement, facial expressions, mime and social class were all things we really focused on, as these were the acting methods we were using. As well as working in an ensemble, the group had never done this before and they responded really well and enjoyed it. At the open rehearsal some warm-up exercises required improvisation, for which the quality of responses impressed the audience. They were also surprised at the power of mime.

Some members of the group were very interested in the camera equipment and experienced some hands-on use during the rehearsals. They were excited about being in front of the green screen knowing the effects it can produce in editing. Other members of the group showed an interest in the music technology and would have had the opportunity to explore this more had there have been more time. This will be incorporated into the plans when we work together again.



There were a lot of skills learnt between the partners and with other professionals involved, especially around technical skills, in particular for equipment and promotional videos to be accessible. As a collaborative project the joint administration was a steep learning curve, the project management skill set being far more complex and time consuming than originally planned for.

## Objective 4: Community Links

*'Using the collaborating partners' varied links to community groups and general promotion, to actively chronicle the journey of the project to a wide range of people, including an open rehearsal to encourage others to see what they are doing, fostering community engagement for more people to join the team and creating an interest in the arts.'*

Having bite sized videos chronicling the development journey provided excellent material for promotion to the community. The videos themselves were viewed by 602 people within our local area. Facebook posts reached 5442, we achieved 9806 impressions with Twitter and 2350 impressions with LinkedIn. Our social media activity, as well as the connections made with others we worked alongside, has raised the profile of the partners and given some new contacts to build on to lead to future work.



The open rehearsal was very successful. Within the audience 7 organisations were represented by a mixture of individuals and groups of members. There were also a lot of the cast's friends and family present. This was a very interactive session, the audience being involved in the warm up exercises and reached out to to respond whilst the rehearsal took shape. This experiential approach had a big impact, firming up existing relationships and opening up new possibilities for future creative collaborative work.

## **Objective 5: Disability Aware**

*'To be actively disability aware of both participants and the audience, learning from each other about different considerations needed for all to get the most out of their experience.'*

The most noticeable thing about the whole project was that disability was never referred to. We were all intrinsically aware of disability issues, but everyone was treated and respected as individuals, their needs taken into account in an inclusive approach. Where things happened as a result of misunderstanding there was proactive problem solving so the situations were handled smoothly and without embarrassment, nothing seen as a problem.

Lived experience of the partners enabled appropriate risk assessments to be carried out and knowledge of the group ensured behavioural needs were taken account of, such as one of the cast being noise sensitive so use of microphones was restricted.

There were learning points, normal actions had to be adapted to accommodate disability needs, such as during a rehearsal the soundtrack needed to be stopped and it was realised that, as the person controlling the sound was sight impaired, he was not going to see the normal 'cut off' hand movement as a cue.

## **Objective 6: Well-being through Creativity**

*'Promoting well-being for all involved by being involved in the creative process, openly valuing everyone's contributions and building resilience to learn from the situations created by the pilot working practices.'*

For the group the creative process really had tremendous benefit. Their enjoyment of being involved was plainly evident and was often commented on. The ease of getting to the rehearsal place was cited as important. Feedback from all the cast was that they loved it, for one it was the highlight of her week, for another he said it was "absolutely fabulous" as he was more involved in the creative process, whereas in other drama groups he had found organisers too bossy. Another common phrase used was "I can be myself".



Feedback from volunteers and professionals involved was also that they were impressed with the working practices, they could feel the benefit of what was being achieved and wanted to continue to be involved. One of the professional actors, who has been involved in inclusive projects before, loved that this one used music, media and sound, "very holistic".

As partners we all said that we hoped we had been good listeners, reassuring, calm and supportive to everyone, especially to each other. We had found the experience not only beneficial to learn about each other, but, due to having to work in different ways, we had all learnt a lot about our own working practices and communication skills. We were the only group within the evaluation who were asked specifically what parts of the experience caused us stress. One consistent answer to this was the

restricted time period of the project and the pace at which we all needed to work. A variety of other reasons were given by each partner, all of which are key to our personal development, as well as to developing the collaboration, future working practices and things to be aware of in any future partnership work.

## Objective 7: Evaluation and Learning

*'Evaluate working practices to apply learning to a variety of future projects planned to widen this collaborative working practice to other community group situations.'*

Where possible working on a project over a longer period of time would be less pressurised. Taking timescales into account, giving time to ensure initial planning gives a good infrastructure to work within, allowing for creative spontaneity with recognition of the impact of changes, is really important.

Although we had a strategic plan, it would have been more advantageous to start the detailed planning and collaborative talks before we knew if the bid was successful. Where we are planning to work on collaborative projects, our model should not be focused on the success of just one funding opportunity, there should be contingency options.

A Service Level Agreement was put in place once the project had started, this should have been done sooner, to ensure we made the best use of the personal assets we have within the group and were better able to dovetail the work together. It would have contributed to the planning.

We all learnt a lot about each other's enterprise/ practitioner skill sets, watching each other at work, being open to try new things, to develop our own skills and learn from each other. David from Global Music Visions C.I.C. who has provided Red Sauce Theatre Company with sound tracks several times, said that "this was the first time I'd really had the opportunity to witness Rachel thrive in her space, and appreciate her brilliant understanding of the needs of her group. She has the right balance – to allow them to explore creativity with her ability to keep the pace and energy going in the right direction. Billy has a relaxed approach to activities, and the group were encouraged and supported to handle and use the filming equipment, and the group listened to what they had to do."

As well as learning about each other, we learnt a lot about our own working practices and partnership working skills. In our willingness to work together we tended to say "Yes" to suggestions that we knew would be tricky for us to personally achieve. For our own wellbeing, we need to stay focused on what is realistic.

We planned to share the marketing and did a fair amount of social media promotion, the bite sized videos of the rehearsals being particularly successful. However, as a team we did not have a wide enough audience. A partner to undertake the PR and Digital Marketing role right from the beginning of the project would have been advantageous, someone experiencing the project to be better able to constantly promote it.

The last word needs to be saved for the group, who were asked at the final performance what they had learnt. One of the cast really struggled to get his words out, but everyone was patient and let him do it in his own time with encouragement, "I have learnt how to make friends and I have also learnt in drama how we do good drama." We all clapped as he had really made the effort to say what he wanted.

Another cast member added using Makaton as well as speech "Thank you, happy face", prompting us all to clap her too!

*"I enjoyed the play and singing very much. I wish you luck in your next production."*  
Marie Costa,  
Lady Mayoress of Portsmouth.



*"It was innovative and greatly entertaining."*  
Hugh Mason,  
Mayor of Portsmouth.

