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**The Merry Wanderers Transition Project**

Feedback from CPD (primary and secondary), Bright Torches Shakespeare workshops and Bright Torches performance projects.

**Feedback from a Bright Torches Performance Project, 2022 -** In 2022 Bright Torches ran a performance project at Charles Dickens Primary School, Southwark. The children helped to create a new adaptation of Pandora’s Box which they then performed to parents & carers and the rest of the school community. The themes in the myth were used to explore transition and boost the children’s confidence as they start secondary school. We received the following feedback from the school.

**“*I would describe the impact as exceptionally strong. The children felt incredible pride in this project as they had been included in every aspect of it since its inception. The children's story telling and character development was brought out by the strong practitioners working with them. As a result, the children felt invested and did a stunning performance. Most important of all, they enjoyed it.***

***The practitioners are incredibly skilled at what they do and are able to take drama to a whole new level. Even some of our less confident children felt inspired to take part.”***

Michael Eggleton, Headteacher, Charles Dickens Primary School

*“****The children’s confidence as performers grew hugely over the course of the project and they had a strong sense of ownership of the production. They were fully invested in the rehearsals and in their roles as co-creators of the piece. All of this shone through in the final performance – they were clearly having a brilliant time, playing with the performance and engaging with the audience. They were all so proud of themselves afterwards!***

***I loved the workshops at the beginning when the children contributed their own lines to the script. I learnt some amazingly useful ideas around staging, scene transitions, engaging with the audience and storytelling through song. I also took away some brilliant techniques to improve performance, such as bowling lines, pumpkin face/raisin face etc. It was really useful to see that rehearsals don’t just have to focus on the actual script/performance but can involve playing and exploring. There are so many things I have taken away from the project that I will use again.***

***The final script was amazing – so funny and accessible, but also moving and erudite. I really appreciated being given the creative space to direct the piece so it did feel like our project but also having check-in days where I was given ideas for direction to refine and improve certain bits. It was also very reassuring that a lot of the areas we needed to work on were parts which I also felt needed work – it felt like we were all on the same page! The children loved the workshops and all the drama games.”***

Nicola Jacobs, Year 6 teacher

**Promenade performance of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, feedback from parents**

In 2014, Georghia Ellinas and Tom Davey created and ran a transition project in Hackney. The following is feedback from parents & carers at Stoke Newington High School attending the promenade performance.

***‘I thought the year 7 performance was brilliant. It was really interesting to see each of the different interpretations and the inventive use of costumes, lights, set and music ( I loved the dancing to Tainted Love. The children were all so engaging and enthusiastic.  Also great to be able to come into the school and see the classrooms and meet the teachers.’***   
Lusha Kellgren

***‘Just a note to say that my daughter, who struggled with literacy in primary school, has really been enjoying the work she has been doing so far in English at SNS. She hasn't said so, but I can see that she is engaged and interested in the work, and introducing a drama activity has made the play all the more accessible. Sadly, (being a teacher) I couldn't see the performance myself, but I hear it went very well.’***

Debra Raimes

***‘This is an initial e-mail to thank the English Department for putting on the play. The idea of moving round the building was excellent.***

***It enabled you to involve a large number of the children and was less intimidating for them to perform. I think having scripts when well read did not detract from the spirit of the show.***

***I enjoyed the dance sequence where Demetrius (Shane) was telling Helena to go away. I thought the staging of that was excellent.***

***Thought each bit was right length of time to absorb everyone's attention. I thought there were some talented students and it is good to catch their enthusiasm as soon as they come into the school . They all looked as though they were enjoying it. My daughter Ellen and her friends said they enjoyed it .***

***Also enjoyed the scene where Titania awakes and thinks she dreamt she had fallen in love with an ass! Great comic moment!***

***I think more time could have gone into costumes but that would have made it a 'production' and I think it is good to get away from all the 'Britain's Got Talent ' bling approach. The approach was more in line with 'improvisation , experiential theatre' tradition which I liked.’***

Barbara Pavely

***‘I just wanted to say how impressed I was by yesterday’s promenade performance.  The year 7’s were a credit to the school and I also wanted to say how impressed I was with the organisation and how the teachers managed the children. It was a great way of seeing all the Y7’s and hearing so many speak with confidence on the work they have been doing on Shakespeare this term.***

***Please thank the teachers involved, I am really glad that the children have been challenged from the outset of their time in Stoke Newington in a creative and stimulating way.  I know my son has been very motivated by his English teacher this term.’***

*Louise Nichols (*Executive Headteacher Kingsmead and Gayhurst Schools)

***‘The performance was excellent, really enjoyable. Obviously a huge amount of work by staff and pupils. I was impressed how engaged pupils were even after several performances of their scene.***

***It felt v inclusive for all participants and audience. In general, I get the impression that studying the play made the pupils feel v mature to be studying Shakespeare, so a great start to their English studies. Thanks to all involved.’***

*Kath Willgress*

***‘Yesterday's promenade performance was an absolute joy! So lovely to see all the Year 7s working so well together, it was lovely to be able to come into school and see them in their everyday habitat! Just wonderful.***

***It was an inspired idea, one that should be continued, as it helps the new Year 7s to bond and feel proud and confident, and it surely helps them to really get to grips with their topic. It’s also great for new parents to be able to come into school and feel part of the school, you made us feel very welcome.***

***All in all, a wonderful event, and one you should definitely repeat each year.***

***Such lovely kids! And staff! Keep up the great work!***

***The only thing to consider for the future would be a possible evening performance as well, for those who can't make it during the day.’***

*Lucy Griffiths*

***‘My daughter is Mia Truman and she started at SNS this September.  I came to watch a Midsummer Night's Dream yesterday and thought it was fantastic.  It was amazing that you'd organised all of that, so soon after the kids had started and that every child was involved in some way (I think!).***

***I can't really comment on English as a subject at the school, as I don't know anything about it yet, but from what I saw yesterday I think Mia will really enjoyed it!***

*Annaliese Truman*

*‘****I thoroughly enjoyed the eclectic performances each group relayed to us - and there were A LOT of us! There are some talented young people in Year 7.***

***The year 7's were excellently behaved and seemed to really enjoy themselves, which, in turn, meant we all enjoyed watching them.***

***Thank you to everyone involved, and congratulations for managing so well under the pressure of the Ofsted visit.’***

*Alice Toomey*

**Teacher Feedback for Bright Torches Shakespeare Workshops**

**“It really was wonderful to see students discussing the finer points of character motivation, on their feet and saying the lines in different ways; Shakespeare’s language seemed less scary, somehow! I think it brought it to life and many students said they saw the characters as more real, with motivation. Language became more tangible and meaningful, linked with movement. It gave them the confidence to have their own opinions and to voice them with a rationale – this is crucial at GCSE but students too often regurgitate what they have been told by a teacher.”**

Sofia Dimoglou, English Teacher, Priory School, Lewes

***‘It was fantastic to see you at work – the way that you captivated the children’s attention and supported them to think more deeply about the power of words, of speech and of action was wonderful to behold. Thank you very much indeed.’***

*Nicholas Gilding, Headteacher, Cotford St Luke Primary School, Somerset, UK*

**Pupil Voice – Student feedback for Bright Torches Shakespeare Workshops**

***“It helped deepen my understanding of Romeo and Juliet. It was very engaging and I would definitely do it again. I would recommend it to some of my friends for sure.”***

***“I enjoyed discussing Romeo and Juliet (not the play, their characters) and going into more depth. Also talking to new people.”***

***“It helped to understand each character’s status in the play and this led to new thoughts.”***

***“I enjoyed working with people I don’t usually work with”***

***“It helped me understand how the characters feel.”***

***“How to delve into a scene and break it apart”***

***“Learning about the stability (and instability) of Lady Macbeth and the difference in the beginning and end.”***

***“Made the scenes we looked at more memorable . Made it easier to remember quotes and characters.”***

***“It gave me a deeper understanding”***

***“Good way to get to know the play.”***

***“How to be my true self”***

***“It helped me learn about emotions of Lady Macbeth”***

**Feedback from Bright Torches Shakespeare CPD for Secondary School Teachers**

***“I was afraid to teach Shakespeare, but after this session has made me feel much more confident in engaging the students.”***

***“Absolutely inspirational. I can now go back to my classroom with a wealth of new ideas to pass on!”***

***“Absolutely brilliant. It was fun, exciting, engaging and there were clear pathways into use in the classroom.”***

***“It was an invaluable resource that I will continue to use throughout my career. Many thanks, Tom!”***

***“Fantastic, a really engaging and useful session brilliantly pitched for PGCE English students, they were clearly applicable to the classroom.”***

***“Excellent - Tom was fantastic at getting us all involved (even those of use that were apprehensive at the start of the day). It was so much fun and provided many ideas to make Shakespeare exciting in the classroom.”***

***“ I can't thank you enough for this! This will be giving me ideas for years to come!”***

***“Fun!! It was very interesting and accessible for everyone, whether you were a fan of Shakespeare***

***and had experience teaching it or not. I learnt a lot and will definitely be using everything we covered in one way or another.”***

***“Fab! Energising and deftly managed. Warm, engaging, genuinely interested, comfortable linking the exercises to the needs of the group and often to the demands of teaching. One of the best active workshops I've done (and have done a few theatre-y ones).”***

***“Engaging - the day went by so quickly. I realised that lessons can be made up of a succession of***

***little tasks that snowball to meet a larger objective. The warm up was fantastic!”***

***“Very useful, I can see myself doing some of the activities with students. They session has made me feel more confident about approaching Shakespeare in the classroom.”***

***“Thoroughly enjoyed it! Tom is a brilliant teacher, and his passion for Shakespeare came across!”***

***“Extremely useful - very insightful and interesting and providing great get in activities in terms of***

***exploring language and character analysis in a fun and proactive way!”***

***“I really enjoyed it. I have only ever studied one work of Shakespeare, and we studied it as if it was another prose text, so I was quite anxious, but Tom did a great job at easing us into the world of this great playwright and poet.”***

***“I really enjoyed the fact that we actually did all the activities we were told about, instead of just***

***noting them down and discussing their advantages and disadvantages. This gave us an opportunity***

***to judge for ourselves how useful/productive the tasks were and whether we would use them in the future. My favourite activity would probably have to be the vowel/consonants one - so strange yet so insightful!”***

***“Whispering thematically linked words - often use key symbols/themes (such as the ones in this***

***exercise - i.e religion/bodies) as anchors for students to approach the text as a whole. All the games that allowed students to discover these kind of anchors for themselves are really useful!”***

***“Whispering the lines in a pair, focusing on pronouns and gesturing while reading in a pair. Great how these focus on the text without stressing about tricky Shakespearean syntax/language. Lovely that the activities honed in on smaller/edited chunks of text.”***

***“Tom provided us with some really useful ways on breaking text down into more digestible chunks***

***especially for students that may struggle at first to grasp the language”***

***“Activities built on one another in practically useful ways. Discussion at the end was useful.”***

***“They (the activities) were all great. I loved the whispering activity for getting into the personal nature of a soliloquy, and I really enjoyed the activities which require moving (e.g., the iambic pentameter dance and active listening). I will be using all of the activities in my classroom though, not just the ones I have mentioned.”***

***“Really fun, immersive, accessible Trojan Horse way into teaching and learning Shakespeare.”***

**Feedback from Bright Torches Shakespeare CPD for Primary School Teachers**

***The session was really engaging, practical and interesting, I learnt a lot that could be used in the classroom in the future. Tom was a fantastic host.***

***Engaging, interesting and full of fun.***

***The idea of using Shakespeare language to engage the children and make them curious about language***

***I don't think there was anything that could've been done to make the session better. I normally feel quite awkward in these sorts of sessions but Tom was great and so friendly that I didn't feel awkward at all, I just had fun. As well as the session being enjoyable, it was also really informative and has definitely given me some ideas.***

***Such a fun/ engaging session***

***I would just say that this session was so engaging and professional that if Tom was to do any more sessions in the future on different aspects I would definitely go again. 10/10***

***Just really great, thoroughly enjoyed the session.***

***I think it has made me feel a bit more confident to be more outspoken and creative when teaching. A very useful and practical session.***

***It was a great session, highly engaging and motivating. It allowed me to begin thinking about teaching through drama. I liked the creativity and low pressure ideas.***