

National Festival of Youth Theatre 2011

DEAF ACCESS PROJECT REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

Promote YT is the national development agency for youth theatre in Scotland. We work with the sector through providing platforms which support advocacy, training and exchange.

Our foremost contribution to the sector is the NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF YOUTH THEATRE (NFYT), an annual event of cultural significance engaging young people, leading artistic organisations and audiences from throughout Scotland and beyond in a celebration of youth performing arts.

In its 6 year existence NFYT has grown consistently, being staged in 5 separate regions of Scotland and showcasing over 50 performances of national and international work. The event has also resulted in the creation of 3 brand-new regional youth theatre groups through associated outreach projects with disadvantaged young people.

For 2011, NFYT hosted an ambitious DEAF ACCESS PROJECT (DAP) staged in association with Solar Bear Theatre Company. This project provided the opportunity for Scotland's DEAF YOUTH THEATRE (the only one of its kind in the UK) to fully participate in the festival supported by an extensive programme of training, awareness and support.

The following report seeks to offer a summary of the DAP detailing feedback and evaluation from the leaders, participants and audience it engaged.

WHY DAP?

It is the Vision Statement of Promote YT *that every young person in Scotland should have access to a quality youth theatre experience*. Youth theatres must therefore not be exclusive in their attitude and should strive to remove barriers in order to promote participation of all young people, including those with additional needs.

Our *2008/09 National Survey of Youth Theatre* indicated that less than 20% of youth theatre members were young people with additional needs. Additionally Creative Scotland, a key investor in the work of our organisation, evaluated that we should: *“establish an understanding of where the issues lie in under-representation and access to youth theatre in Scotland and a strategy to respond to specific issues”*.

In pursuit of these goals a nationally-focused project was considered essential in encouraging the sector to take a huge step forward in addressing the under-representation of young people with additional needs in youth performing arts. NFYT 2011 offered an ideal platform to accommodate such a project.

PROJECT DELIVERY

DAP was conceived through developing a working partnership with Solar Bear.

Solar Bear are an award-winning theatre company established in 2002 that develop new and multi-disciplinary theatre-making processes. Their work is accessible to as wide a range of people as possible and they work with a broad variety of excluded groups. They have an excellent reputation for their learning and consultation services, and have delivered over 500 workshops nationwide and, in January 2008, launched Scotland's first DEAF YOUTH THEATRE.

DAP subsidised the participation of the DEAF YOUTH THEATRE in NFYT 2011 Performance Programme, supporting their inclusion with an extensive programme of training, awareness and support delivered by specialist staff from Solar Bear. DAP was designed to penetrate all aspects of the NFYT 2011.

“We have also been fortunate enough to be supported by an ever-increasing following of audience, both deaf and hearing, and an on-going interest in the work we are doing in general. When we were approached by Promote YT to consider being part of this year’s Festival we saw it as an opportunity to increase that level of interest, whilst also promoting the notion of accessibility to participation in theatre by the deaf community”

Gerry Ramage, Artistic Director, Solar Bear

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The principle objectives of DAP were to:

1. Support the participation of the DEAF YOUTH THEATRE in the NFYT 2011 programme.
2. Ensure that the NFYT 2011 event is made suitable for the participants of the DEAF YOUTH THEATRE allowing them to fully integrate with the festival programme through:
 - a. the British Sign Language Interpretation (BSL) of all performances, workshops and events,
 - b. the provision of support workers,
 - c. intensive training for Core NFYT 2011 staff,
 - d. hosting workshops to youth and adult participants to improve their ability to communicate with the deaf and hearing-impaired.
3. Raise the awareness of young deaf performers to the wider theatre sector and to public audiences.
4. Provide a legacy to Scotland’s youth theatre sector with the aim of equipping them with the tools, understanding and confidence to open up their regional youth theatre activity to young deaf people and / or young people with additional needs.
5. Create a structural model for the future of the NFYT which will ensure that the event remains accessible to young people of all needs and abilities.

INTERPRETATION (BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE)

British Sign is naturally the first language of many of the DEAF YOUTH THEATRE members and, therefore, it was important to ensure that BSL was used as and when those members were directly involved in activity or when they would have been excluded had it not been available. Having a team of BSL Interpreters and Communication Support Workers involved meant that deaf participants had the freedom to select the activity they wanted and not just the one that was ‘being signed’.

PERFORMANCE

BRANCHES by DEAF YOUTH THEATRE was performed on the opening night of the NFYT and made up part of the programme of 15 performances staged over the festival weekend.

BRANCHES was created through a workshop/rehearsal process in Summer 2010.

Solar Bear were keen to offer participants the opportunity to explore the traditions of storytelling whilst creating a modern day fairy tale that had relevance to young people who were deaf. The forest is traditionally a location for such styles of work, being a place in which inner darkness is confronted and worked through; where uncertainty is resolved about who one is; and where one begins to understand who one wants to be.

There are also, traditionally, specific characters in a fairy tale, i.e. the brothers and the ‘magic’ helpers that we wanted to include. So grew the story of the Boy and his Brother and The Girl and her Lover all of whom run away to the forest; the Boy, because he couldn’t just be who he wanted to be – the Brother, to bring him home and the Girl and her Lover, who weren’t allowed to be together because she used sign language and he used spoken language. Though a series of ‘magical encounters’ the four characters resolve their issues and are ready to return home.

Through BSL, all 15 performances staged through the NFYT Performance Programme were made accessible to the participants of the DEAF YOUTH THEATRE.

“I had quite underestimated the peer learning opportunities that the festival would provide. Not only were our young people able to observe other group’s work, being able to compare and contrast how different approaches to theatre making impacted on the finished piece, but they were also able to offer constructive criticism and a good deal of praise for others’ achievements. This marks a huge learning curve for our members; many of who had never had an opportunity to consider the scope there is in theatre. They were also very moved by the efforts some groups had gone to, to incorporate BSL into their own performances”

Gerry Ramage, Artistic Director, Solar Bear

TRAINING AND LEARNING

Training and learning experiences played a key role in DAP and were designed to give staff, adult leaders and youth participants a grounding in which to improve their ability and confidence in communicating with the deaf and hearing impaired.

BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS, a 2 hour ‘deaf-awareness’ workshop facilitated by Solar Bear, spearheaded the training element of DAP and was delivered in 2 stages covering the following areas:

- What it means to be deaf
- How to work with deaf people in all areas of theatre
- How to run an accessible workshop for deaf people
- An introduction to issues
- An introduction to British Sign Language
- Acceptable terminology
- Theatre signs and terminology
- How to work with an interpreter

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS was first staged on May 17th 2011 as part of an NFYT Fact Finding Day for adult leaders bringing groups to the NFYT 2011. For adult leaders unable to attend this day a BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS Training DVD was distributed.

The BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS workshop was then restaged specifically for NFYT staff on June 27th 2011. This allowed Solar Bear to work more intensely with the delivery team of the festival as well as venue staff and volunteers.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS training provided through DAP was free of charge to all participants.

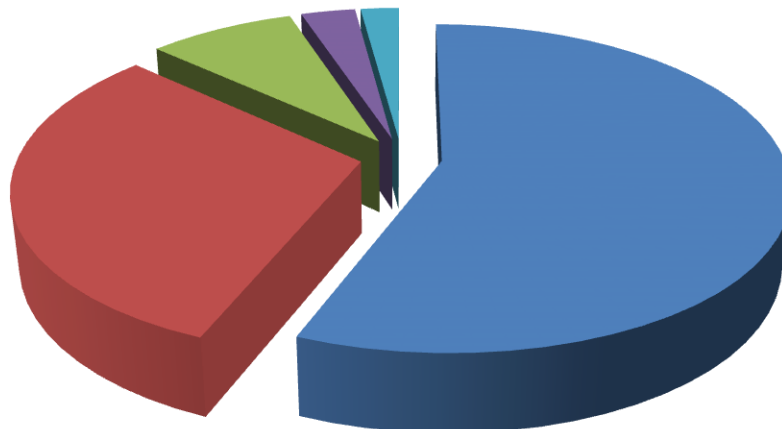
Deaf awareness training was also delivered directly to the youth participants of the festival through sign-related games, exercises and workshops facilitated as part of the Workshop Programme supporting the NFYT event.

Through BSL, all learning experiences available through the NFYT Workshop Programme were made accessible to the participants of the DEAF YOUTH THEATRE.

“Through participation in the wide range of workshops on offer, our young people were able to share new learning experiences with their hearing peers on an equal footing and at the same pace as everyone else. This was a new experience for many of our young people who often feel ‘left behind’ when it comes to learning experiences”

Gerry Ramage, Artistic Director, Solar Bear

PARTICIPATION



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|---|------------|
| 1. Audience engaged through BRANCHES performance | TOTAL: 317 |
| 2. Young people engaged in DAP through NFYT participation | TOTAL: 173 |
| 3. Adults engaged through BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS training | TOTAL: 46 |
| 4. Young people engaged from DEAF YOUTH THEATRE | TOTAL: 17 |
| 5. Adults engaged from DEAF YOUTH THEATRE | TOTAL: 12 |

DAP ENGAGEMENT:

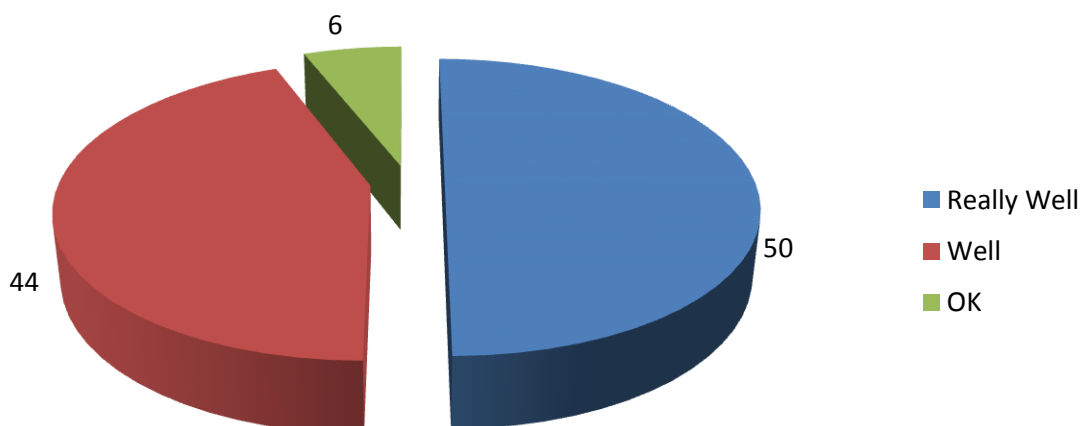
TOTAL: 565

In addition, all 14 participating youth theatres received the BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS Training Pack & DVD produced by Solar Bear.

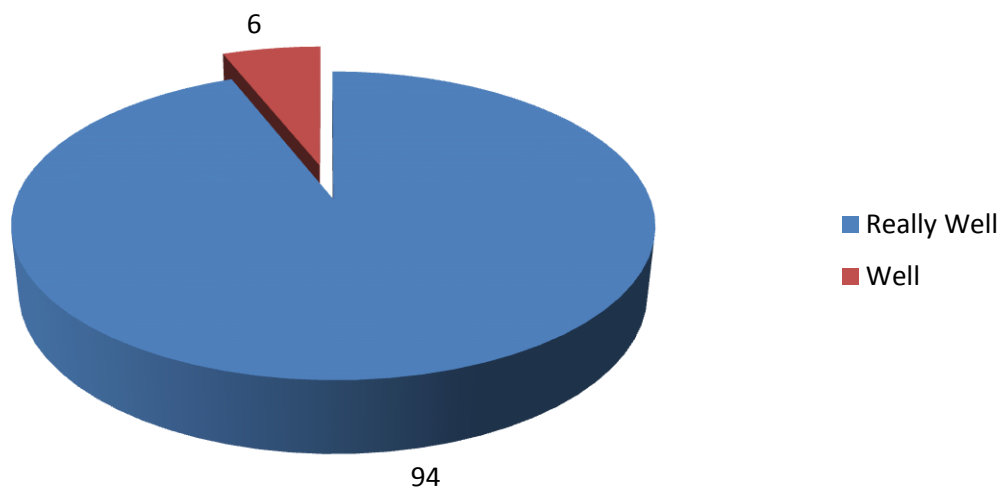
LEGACY

Through the process of evaluating NFYT 2011 adult leaders from the 14 participating groups were questioned as to how well the DAP achieved the following 3 core objectives:

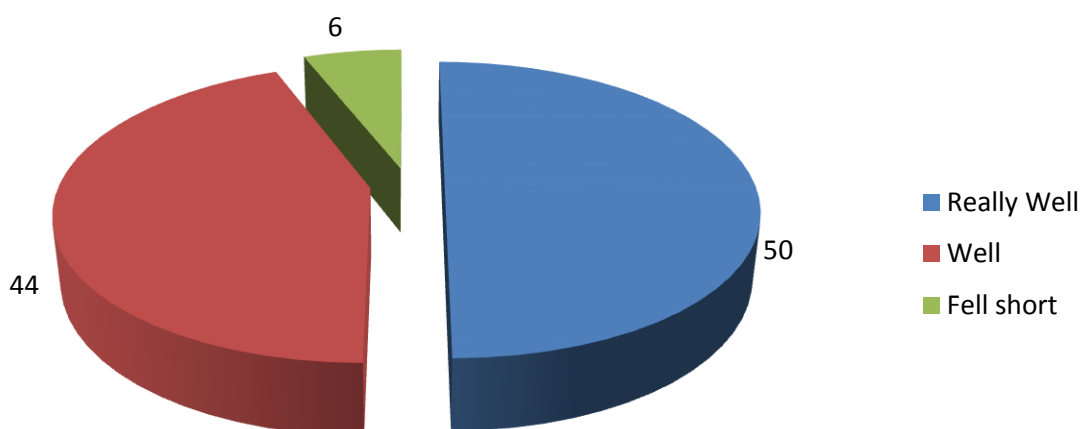
- To provide subsidy and support to DEAF YOUTH THEATRE to allow them to participate fully in the NFYT**



2. To raise the awareness of young deaf performers among the wider theatre sector and to public audiences



3. To provide a legacy to the Scottish youth theatre sector; i.e. equipping them with the tools, understanding and confidence to open up regional youth theatre activity to young deaf people and/or young people with additional needs



Promote YT are using the experiences of DAP to focus on a new strategic aim of staging project work from 2012 onwards which will focus on the improvement of access to youth theatre and the diversity of those participating, ultimately to give every child in Scotland access to a quality youth theatre experience.

Infrastructure is being put in place for NFYT 2012 to support the BSL interpretation of the full performance and workshop programme. Due to an increase in the scale of the event this will be a bigger operation than staged through DAP in 2011.

In addition, Promote YT and Solar Bear have been invited to share the experiences of DAP as an example of best practice at Scottish Dance Theatre's Symposium: *Pathways to the Profession* hosted at Dundee Rep Theatre in 2012. This symposium aims to address routes into the performing arts for disabled people.

"I feel sure that NFYT 2011 marks the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship between Promote YT and Solar Bear / DEAF YOUTH THEATRE"
Gerry Ramage, Artistic Director, Solar Bear

EVALUATION

The following quotes illustrate feedback from the range of participants who engaged in the DAP Project collected through recording and post project evaluation:

Whilst I cannot speak for all the young participants at the Festival, I expect that for many of them, the social side of the event was eagerly awaited, as with DYT members. This aspect of the work of Promote YT should not be underestimated. All our members felt socially included throughout every phase of the event and this was, in no small way, down to the ethos of the festival and the commitment of the organisers to ensure that every single participant was in every way fully engaged in all the festival had to offer. It cannot be understated how enriching and refreshing this was for some of our members.

Gerry Ramage, Artistic Director, Solar Bear

One of our young deaf people said, after meeting other hearing young people, "Wow, they are just like us... only hearing!" Talk about building bridges! Thanks NFYT.

Natalie MacDonald, Access Officer for Solar Bear

Even though we are deaf, even though some of us can't speak/hear anything, I think we just proved that we are one of the best theatre groups in the festival!!! When I asked people what they thought of 'Branches' and they said; - even though they don't know sign language, due to the teamwork and the body language they were able to pick up quite easily what they said – they found it romantic and one person was crying their eyes out because it was just powerful Well done DEAF YOUTH THEATRE.

Jake Murray, Youth Participant, DEAF YOUTH THEATRE

An amazing experience to see the DEAF YOUTH THEATRE and for so many groups and young people to meet and exchange.

Adult Leader

I was really happy to see all the participants of the BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS training using what they had learnt and even putting it into practice for their performances. That's just great, everyone was thinking of accessibility.

Adult Leader

The NFYT has been the highlight of my summer! All the shows were incredible and being able to see / work with the DEAF YOUTH THEATRE was such a rewarding experience.

NFYT Youth Participant

DEAF YOUTH THEATRE should be extremely proud. Not only did you open us up to the reality of the world you may live in but you gave us such a moving piece of theatre which captivated the whole of NFYT. It was a moving, honest and stunning performance. You all represented your youth theatre so well and I have learnt so much from you guys.

NFYT Youth Participant

Congratulations to all involved in "Branches". A stunning piece of theatre.

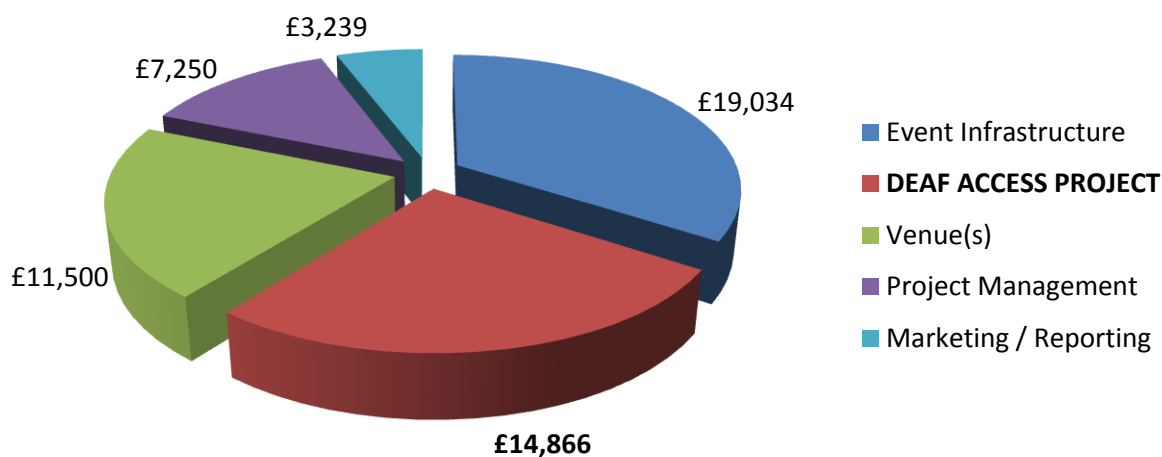
Audience Member

BUDGET

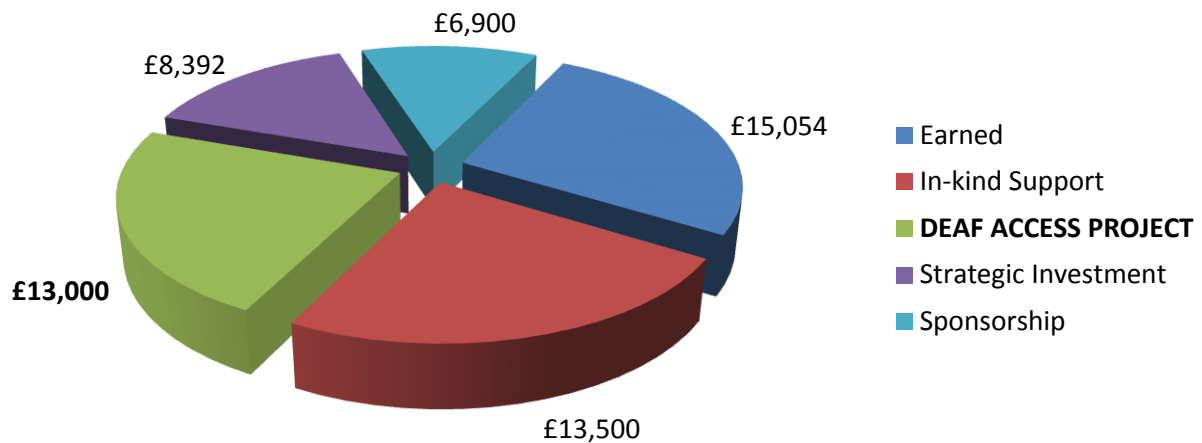
All funding for the DAP Project was reserved to be expended on activity specific to the aims and objectives of this project the expenditure and income on which is as follows:

EXPENDITURE:		INCOME:	
Training Provision		Grant Income:	
Fact Finding Day Delivery	£670	The Foyle Foundation	£5,000
NFYT Staff Training Delivery	£150	The Gannochy Trust	£5,000
Subtotal	£820	The Hugh Fraser Foundation	£1,000
Interpretation (BSL)		The Birkdale Trust	£1,000
14 x Performances	£700	The Greggs Foundation	£1,000
Workshops / Events	£700	Subtotal	£13,000
Subtotal	£1,400	INCOME TOTAL:	£13,000
Resource Materials		PROJECT BALANCE:	-£1,866
Training DVD production and issue	£482		
Follow-up resource packs / material	£600		
Subtotal	£1,082		
Performance / Participation			
Support staff	£5,853		
Production costs	£1,250		
NFYT participation costs	£2,380		
Subtotal	£9,483		
Project Subtotal:	£12,785		
VAT to Solar Bear:	£2,081		
EXPENDITURE TOTAL:	£14,866		

The entire cost of the NFYT 2011 was £59,858. DAP represented 25% of this total NFYT expenditure as follows:



The entire income generated for the NFYT 2011 was £56,846. Funding of DAP represented 23% of total NFYT income as follows:



All shortfall in income was met by Promote YT (Scotland)'s reserves.

CREDITS

As a charitable organisation Promote YT relies heavily on investment and partnerships working in order to realise the strategic aims and objectives of our project work.

Promote YT would like to acknowledge and thank the following, all of whom made the DAP Project possible.

Direct project funders:

The Foyle Foundation
The Gannochy Trust
The Huge Fraser Foundation
The Birkdale Trust
The Greggs Foundation

Project partners:

Solar Bear Theatre Company
ON at Fife

Wider project funders (through supporting the NFYT):

Fife Council's Strategic Events Investment Fund
Shell UK Limited

Promote YT receives investment from:



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