

Spotlight

on Children & the Arts

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Committed to Future Generations

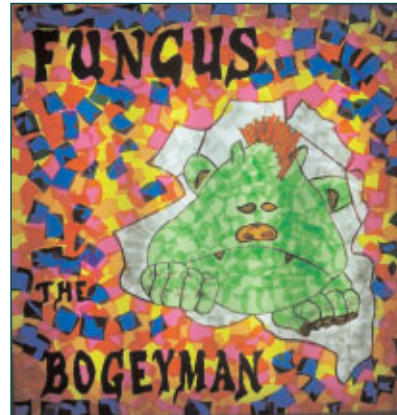
By Simon Richey, Children & the Arts Trustee and Director of Education at the Gulbenkian Foundation

Children & the Arts chiefly exists to encourage young people in schools to acquire the confidence and enthusiasm to visit cultural venues, first under the wing of the school and later, it is hoped, on their own or in the company of friends.

For many young people this doesn't come easily, believing that theatres, galleries, concert halls and the rest are 'not for the likes of them'. This is why carefully planned programmes in schools are so necessary: they have the capacity to challenge young people's assumptions and open their eyes to opportunities they might once have written off.

So the commitment in the Government's Children's Plan, published in December of last year, to giving young people, 'no matter where they live or what their background', the chance to develop 'as informed spectators through attending top quality theatre and dance performances, world class exhibitions, galleries, museums and heritage sites' is hugely to be welcomed. The Children's Plan also commits to participation in the arts in a more practical sense, but the emphasis on developing 'spectator' skills, skills that will serve young people throughout their lives, is also critical and timely.

No doubt the small print of this commitment will now need to be attended to but the commitment itself is there to see.



Start Project Snapshot: artsdepot's first year with Start

artsdepot in North Finchley, London began their Start Programme in September 2007. The venue selected ten primary schools from their local area to work with, all of whom experience a variety of difficulties. Many of the pupils speak English as a second language, large percentages of the pupils are entitled to free school meals and many experience emotional and behavioural difficulties.

For the first phase of Start, the 700 children involved in the project worked with 5 professional artists. Each school had thirty hours with their artist, creating pieces in a variety of different mediums including photography, sculpture, sound installation and film.

When completed, the children's work was displayed in the artsdepot gallery and on 20th November 2007 children attended the opening of their exhibition and experienced seeing their own creations in a professional and public space. The exhibition ran until 13th January 2008.

The benefits of the experience were phenomenal. One child from Summerside School, spoke for the first time at school when he came to the exhibition. He had worked with photographer Poppy Szayb, and some of images in the exhibition were of him.

When he saw himself on the gallery wall he said excitedly, "That's me".

Northway School a school for children with complex learning disabilities, where over half the pupils are on the autistic spectrum, also reported some excellent results. One child who is usually disengaged in lessons, completely changed when working with sound artist Ged Barry. He became involved, looking forward to his Friday sessions with Ged, often asking when he would next be coming into school and began to communicate well with both artist and pupils.

Artsdepot's Start programme continues in the New Year with partner schools attending a performance of *The Magic Sandals* in February. The artsdepot Start programme is generously supported by Pentland Group Plc.

Children & the Arts Christmas Carol Concert

On 12th December 2007, over 500 people gathered in St James's Church, Piccadilly for our inaugural Carol Concert. The concert included beautiful renditions of traditional carols performed by Collegium Musicum of London, Notting Hill Preparatory School Choir, The Choirboys and the congregation, as well as Blake who sang *White Christmas*.



Celebrity guests Rowan Atkinson, Jeremy Irons and Kate Adie treated the audience to seasonal readings including *Christmas* by Sir John Betjeman and a hilarious rendition of John Julius Norwich's *The Twelve Days of Christmas*.

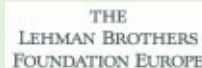
Radio 4's James Naughtie also joined us to remind the congregation of the work of the charity and the importance of the arts for all children. The message was met with enormous generosity and **the event raised over £37,000**. Enormous thanks to our event sponsor, SEI Investments (Europe) Ltd, Classic FM for broadcasting the concert and everyone involved.



Our thanks to The Lehman Brothers Foundation Europe who have awarded Children & the Arts £75,000 for our *start* programme in the South East for 2007/08.

This award makes The Lehman Brothers Foundation Europe our lead donor to the Start programme and their grant will help to support projects with organisations across the South of England such as the De La Warr Pavilion, The Fitzwilliam Museum and The Nuffield in Southampton. Their funded programme will reach over 5,000 school children in 24 schools, working with 10 arts organisations.

Each partnership will use a different art form and tailored approach to help local children develop new skills, self-confidence and creativity by accessing high quality arts experiences.



theatrequest The finale

On Monday 28th January 2008 over 250 children representing 13 UK schools travelled to London for the grand finale of TheatreQuest, the Children & the Arts project in which they had been involved since September 2007.

In total over 1,300 children took part in the project. Each school was partnered with a local theatre where the children saw a professional show and got to know the people behind the scenes. They then worked with theatre practitioners to study a brand new play, written by award-winning children's author Jamila Gavin and specially commissioned by Children & the Arts with project sponsors Land Securities.

The schools were able to showcase their own interpretations of the play, which contains

strong environmental themes. They used costumes and props they had created from recycled materials in local celebrations that were held in Land Securities shopping centres and theatres in December 2007. Their achievements were again celebrated alongside a performance by Harry Lloyd, most recently Will Scarlet in the BBC television series *'Robin Hood'*, at the finale at the Unicorn Theatre. The event was attended by Children & the Arts President HRH The Prince of Wales and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall.



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Children & the Arts are moving to permanent offices from 17th March 2008. New contact details will follow in the next edition of Spotlight on Children & the Arts.