

Big Brum Theatre-in-Education Newsletter

Winter 2005

Director's notes:

Dear friends and colleagues,

The year 2005 will linger in the collective memory here at Big Brum for a long time to come. Our junior programme, **Separation Wall**, and our secondary programme, **The Under Room**, represent a body of work that has challenged us as much as the young people that we work with. To develop our practice we have had to constantly question our values, both as a Company and as individuals, in relation to the needs of the young people we meet. It has been a real education for us at this time to explore with the children how they think and feel about themselves and the world in which they live. We strive to take the lessons from each TIE programme we create into the next. This gives us real continuity.

We are aware however that continuity of relationships with our schools is far more difficult to achieve because the Company's cycle of work means that, generally speaking, we only get the opportunity to revisit schools once every year. In that time a great deal in the life of schools, and the Company, changes. We are intensely aware of this gap and are looking at ways of sustaining relationships with our schools in the periods between visits. This newsletter, the first of what we hope will become a regular bulletin, is an attempt to bridge this gap in part. We welcome any responses or questions arising from it, and we would like you to forward it on to anyone that you think would be interested in the work of Big Brum.

With thanks and best wishes

Chris Cooper
Artistic Director

Spotlight:

The Under Room

After an extremely well received tour of schools, colleges and arts venues, **The Under Room** is due to end its current run when it reaches Roade School in Northampton on the 19th December.

The play, the fifth new work commissioned by Big Brum and written by Edward Bond, has already reached audiences around the country and abroad, and has garnered massive public interest in Big Brum's work. The play received an impressive review in The Guardian, and gained press coverage in several regional newspapers, including the Metro, the Barnsley Chronicle and the Birmingham Mail.

Thanks goes to those who have supported the tour, either as recipients of the work or as visitors to the programme. If you were unable to catch **The Under Room** you missed a real treat. Watch out for our tour of Edward Bond's **The Balancing Act** in the autumn of 2006.



International Focus:

Norway

A unique invitation paid recognition to the Company's expertise in the field of theatre-in-education, when earlier this month **The Under Room** was taken to the high-profile **Mini-Midi-Maxi Theatre Festival** in Bergen. The Company, the only non-Nordic practitioners to attend the event, gave two performances of Edward Bond's new play at Bergen's National Theatre. The piece met with huge enthusiasm and acclaim, even appearing on the front page of a Bergen newspaper! Chris Cooper, Big Brum's Artistic Director, was also invited to take part in a major seminar on theatre in schools, and ran a workshop on TIE.

The visit comes out of a long-standing connection with the University of Bergen, which has already seen staff and students take part in a weeklong programme of activities in Birmingham earlier this year. Chris made a return visit in April when he went to teach for a week at the university.

Hungary

After a successful application to the EU funded Phare programme, Big Brum are now preparing to engage in partnership with Kava, one of the leading theatre-in-education companies in Hungary, and two newly-established companies. Our particular role in the project will be to provide training and input into Hungary's developing TIE practice and theory, which will involve hosting visits from the Hungarian practitioners here in Birmingham, and going over to Budapest to run a week of workshops.

The project develops links established since 2000, and furthered when actor-teacher Adam Bethlenfalvy, from the Budapest-based TIE company Roundtable, joined the company as the second recipient of the Geoff Gillham International Fellowship Award.

Forthcoming:

Spring 2006

The Giant's Embrace

A half-day theatre-in-education programme for Key Stage One.

In spring 2006 Big Brum will take young people on a journey of the imagination...

Things are hotting up. The smoke from his oven is choking us all. Even the great rains can't put it out.

The Giant is always hungry, always on the lookout for what he can take and put in the pot. The earth shudders beneath his feet, he's tearing up the ground, root and branch, house and home-devouring all to fill his great belly. He swallows everything that gets in his way. What about the little people? What to do? We'd better teach him a lesson before he starts on us...

This innovative and exciting new programme for KS1 explores the challenging and urgent issue of sustainability, the virtue of delayed gratification and the value of common sense.

To make a booking, or for further inquiries, contact Claire at Big Brum.

Autumn 2006

The Balancing Act

A full-day programme for KS4+

"That's the spot that holds the world in balance. If it was trod on the balanc'd go."

After an immensely successful first outing in 2003, **The Balancing Act** is set to enjoy a revival in autumn 2006. The play, the fourth in Edward Bond's Big Brum Quintet, is a riotous black comedy exploring what happens when the world, dominated by irrational ideas, obsession and fanaticism, descends into chaos.

The **Balancing Act** will be touring West Midlands schools and colleges, and national venues, from Oct-Dec '06.

The Forum:

Calling all educators! In order to develop a dialogue amongst educators and artists we are inviting you to submit comments, questions, examples of best practice etc. We will publish material in the Forum section of this newsletter, which will be shared across schools, colleges, funders and fellow arts organizations. Please send contributions to Claire at Big Brum.

Dates for your diary:

22 rd Dec '05	Big Brum close for Christmas
9 th Jan '06	Big Brum return to work
Mar '06	The Giant's Embrace-tour begins
Mar '06	Visit from Hungarian partners

Contact us

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