

Big Brum is 25! So some of the children who first encountered Big Brum may now be parents or teachers of the children seeing their work in schools today. And some may be head teachers or leaders in education or arts policy. Have they carried with them any of the knowledge of that encounter? Have they remembered the power of that mode of knowing, possible in the moment of encountering those powerful dramatic images and their personal relationship to them?

Over the 25 years, dependent upon public and charitable funds and fees from schools, Big Brum will have been asked to justify their work and existence in terms of business development strategies, the end of year balance sheet, evidence of learning outcomes, numbers of children reached, numbers of new productions or people employed, accredited qualifications attained by students; tickets sold. This record will not give us any insight or record of how Big Brum's short encounters in classrooms and theatre spaces affect young audiences and their teachers.

Such "measurements" will give us no real or reliable knowledge about what Big Brum has done or is capable of doing. Anyone interested in knowing that, needs to experience their programmes first hand to uncover the truth. Then they will witness children grappling with the most important of human concerns. As well as witnesses, they will be participants in and interrogators of dramatic images of our world and will remember the responsibilities we have to assess our part in making it one we wish to see our children live in.

One generation of this work is not going to change the world, or even the city, but 25 years is a good round number and a genuine excuse to celebrate achievements, shout "encore" and tell stories of why the work of Big Brum is of vital importance to all our futures.

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