



# BIG BRUM Theatre-in-Education NEWSLETTER

Issue 2

Summer 2006

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## Director's Notes

Dear friends and colleagues

The end of the Giant's Embrace tour has created the opportunity for reflection on a working year before the summer break arrives. The on-going evolution of the Company has proceeded at, what feels at times like, breakneck pace. I'm sure the relentless pressure to meet and deliver targets-the most valuable being those we set ourselves-will be recognised in every classroom and working environment.

We can take great strength though from all that the

Company has achieved this year, secure in the knowledge that while we can always improve, we can honestly say that Big Brum has worked to the absolute limit of our collective capacity and ability.

Tours of The Under Room and The Giant's Embrace, and the array of special projects and workshops the Company has produced, have continued to develop relationships with teachers and fellow professionals that are extremely important to us, and has forged many new ones both at home and abroad. What unites us all is the desire to provide the artistic and

educational experiences that young people deserve.

We thank all of our colleagues for the support and encouragement you have given to our work. Above all, a big thank you to the young people who continue to inspire us and give meaning to our working lives.

Enjoy the summer break.

Chris Cooper

Artistic Director

## Spotlight: The Giant's Embrace

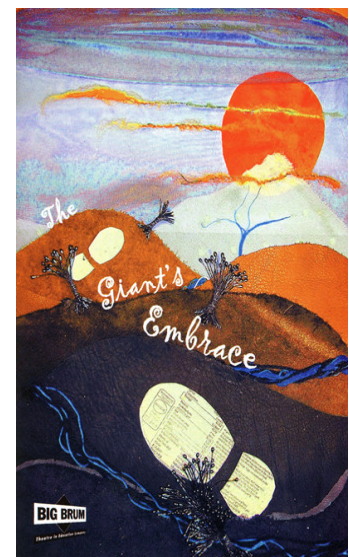
Big Brum's current theatre-in-education programme for KS1, 'The Giant's Embrace', comes to a close this week after an immensely successful tour of Birmingham schools.

The programme, which explores the virtues of delayed gratification through use of story form and participatory drama, engages young people in a journey of the imagination.

Students, in role as story makers, are charged with finishing Tom's story. That of a young boy who is struggling to live in a world dominated, and

stripped of life, by the greedy Giant. In his search for food Tom almost becomes food for the Giant, surviving only when he promises the lives of his mother and baby brother -a dilemma for the story makers to resolve.

The programme, which aims to engage children in conceptual thinking about our world, has been adapted by Welsh TIE company, Theatr Powys, who are currently on tour with their version of the show.





Budapest's Kava Cultural Group.

## International News

After playing host to Kava Cultural Group, one of Hungary's largest TIE companies, in May, Big Brum were delighted to return the visit over the Whitsun holiday.

The company were invited to Budapest to lead a week of discussion, workshops and sharing practice with Kava.

The visit came at a significant point in the growth and development of TIE in Hungary, where new

companies are starting to emerge.

The week's highlights included observing current TIE programmes by Kava and Roundtable, and leading an afternoon workshop session with a class of Hungarian students.

All company members would agree that the experience was a rich and rewarding one, promising much for future international links and collaboration.

### Avignon

BB Artistic Director, Chris Cooper, recently spoke at the prestigious 60th Avignon

festival, held annually in France. The trip marked the first time a Big Brum member has attended the festival as a guest speaker. Chris also had the opportunity to run workshops with young people, and watch the first French production of 'The Balancing Act', which was commissioned by Big Brum from Edward in 2003, afterwards participating in a post-show discussion with his French counterpart.

The invitation to contribute to this year's event was in recognition of the unique ten-year collaboration between Big Brum and Bond.

**"Why can't he  
teach us to  
farm the land  
and grow  
apples?"  
Pupil at  
Mayfield  
School**

## Creative Partnerships Update

From the shadows of the town hall clock tower, a ragged figure limps into the moonlight. A wind stutters and stirs around his frail limbs. The old peasant shivers, pulls his coarse cloak tighter around his throat. The voices of laughing, playing children - echoes of what's long lost - swirl in the rising wind. The old man smiles strangely: *"It's startin' again. The story's coming out..."*

So began the piece of theatre

co-created and performed by a cluster of pupils from Holte Performing & Visual Arts College and Mayfield Special School in May.

The performance came as part of a four week integration project, designed and led by Big Brum, and funded by Creative Partnerships Birmingham.

Students worked with Big Brum on the story of the Pied Piper, exploring the

world in which events take place, and focusing on the 'value' of childhood in society where to be wealthy is to be godly.

Pupils spent much of the process engaged in the central dilemma of the story, and in developing the character of the street boy, through whom the legacy of Hamelin's tragic history unfolds. The talented group also worked with freelance musician, Paul Carroll, to compose a soundtrack to the play using Soundbeam.

## Company News

This summer will see the departure of Big Brum's Hungarian actor-teacher, Adam Bethlenfalvy.

Adam, who joined the Company as the second recipient of the Geoff Gillham International Fellowship Award in August 2004, leaves us to rejoin Roundtable TIE in his home town of Budapest, where he plans to take a lead

role as Artistic Director of the Company.

Adam first appeared in 'Virtue' in the autumn of 2004, and has since performed with the Company in several TIE tours, including the current programme, 'The Giant's Embrace', and perhaps most memorably as the 'Dummy Actor' in Edward Bond's 'The Under Room'.

Adam will be greatly missed by all at Big Brum, not only as a talented actor-

teacher, but as a friend.

We would like to thank him for his contribution to the work, not least all that he has done to help forge and sustain links with our Hungarian partners. We look forward to a future of rich collaboration with Roundtable. Good luck, Adam!

For more information about the Geoff Gillham International Fellowship Award, please contact Claire at Big Brum.

## Big Brum Youth Theatre

Big Brum's highly regarded Youth Theatre will maintain their long tradition of performing at international theatre events when they embark on an exciting trip to Poland this October.

Following the huge success of *One Hundred Thousand Whys* last summer, which mapped the fortunes of a group of children in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942, BBYT have been invited to perform the play at the International Festival of Theatre for Children and

Young People in Warsaw itself.

As well as performing at the festival BBYT will be taking part in workshops and meeting other young people from Poland and elsewhere. They will also make a visit to Treblinka, where they will see for themselves the final destination of so many children from the Warsaw Ghetto, including those of the famous Janus Korczak Orphanage, around which part of the play is loosely based.

The whole visit will be a once in a lifetime opportunity for the young members of the company to come face to face with one of the darkest periods in human history, but one which they believe we can all learn a great deal from.

The group is currently looking to raise £5,000 for the trip. If you would be interested in sponsoring BBYT, and helping this talented group of young people get to Warsaw, please get in touch with the



## Events

### BB:25 in '07

Big Brum will next year celebrate 25 years in Theatre-in-Education!

To commemorate this landmark birthday we will be hosting a two day programme of events on Fri 1st-Sat 2nd June at the Crescent Theatre, Birmingham.

Details are yet to be finalised, but expect a varied

programme of theatre performance, workshops, forum, keynote speeches, and a sharing of theatre-in-education programmes by the Company and partners from both home and abroad.

A detailed programme of events will be sent to you in the near future. In the meantime, pencil the dates in your diary!

### BBYT performance

In anticipation of their visit to Poland in October, BBYT will be staging a revival performance of *'One Hundred Thousand Whys'*.

Performances will take place on 28th-29th Sept at Pegasus Primary School, Castle Vale.

For more details contact Ceri Townsend on 0121 464 4606.

**“[Big Brum]...  
are not afraid  
to tackle big  
stories, big  
ideas and  
challenging  
issues.”**

## Final Thought...

A big thank you to all who attended the open evening for our current programme, 'The Giant's Embrace' at the end of March.

The event was a real success, with a mix of arts professionals, young people, educators and academics showing their support.

Our particular thanks goes to the key speakers of the evening; Ben Ballin from Tide~, Jayne Bennion from BASS, and Ros Robins, Director of Arts for Arts Council

West Midlands.

For those of you who missed the event, we include a short extract from the Ros' contribution to the evening,

“...There are several reasons why we fund the work of Big Brum. First is the quality of the work, its intrinsic artistic value...The Company are not afraid to tackle big stories, big ideas and challenging issues-issues that are of relevance and concern to the children and young people in the

audience. Secondly, the range of the Company's work. Because of the experience and skills that the Company has built up over many years, they are able to deliver a wide variety of opportunities for engagement in a variety of settings. For example, their schools' programme, youth theatre, workshops, and the exemplary work they have carried out with excluded young people in Pupil Referral Units. It is this range and quality of work that has earned the Company a reputation and audiences, not just in the region but nationally and internationally.”

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Keep up with our latest news  
and programming information  
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## Dates for your diary:

- |                     |  |                                  |  |
|---------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>21st July</b>    | Big Brum close for summer.                       | <b>9th Oct</b>                   | 'The Balancing Act' by Edward Bond starts touring. |
| <b>21st Aug</b>     | Big Brum reopen.                                 | <b>Oct 2006</b>                  | BBYT to Warsaw.                                    |
| <b>9th Sept</b>     | BB @ Artsfest<br>2pm @ The Door (REP)            | <b>1st -2nd June 2007</b>        |  |
| <b>28/29th Sept</b> | BBYT performance<br>'One Hundred Thousand Whys'. | <b>Big Brum 25th Anniversary</b> | More information soon!                             |

## Forthcoming...

### Big Brum Theatre-in-Education

Present

### THE BALANCING ACT

By Edward Bond

A young woman stares expressionlessly at a spot on the floor across the room. "That's the spot that holds the world in balance. If it was trod on the balance'd go."

Her boyfriend wants to know how long she will lock herself in a condemned flat in order to save the world. He turns to the demolition Foreman for expert assistance...

With the world precariously balanced, we follow Nelson on a journey in search for a reasonable explanation: he encounters a power crazed DWP official, a top-hatted thief, a delusional woman who mistakes him for her son, a frustrated wife and the mysterious Mr Pringle. Can the world be saved or will it end in a frantic tango?

*The Balancing Act*, the fourth play 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 on tour for schools in the West Midlands from Oct-Dec 2006. For further details, contact [claire@bigbrum.plus.com](mailto:claire@bigbrum.plus.com) or telephone 0121 464 4604.