

## Preparation and follow-up activities for teachers

### Using your performance visit to inspire and enrich learning

We passionately believe that theatre and dance play a vital role in meeting children's cultural, social and developmental needs. But while schools can take children to the theatre, it is teachers who can truly engage children with theatre through the realisation that engagement does not and should not end when the production is over.

The activities we have suggested are designed for teachers to use with children attending a festival performance to extend their experience, encourage emotional literacy and explore characters and stories in more depth, before and after the performance.

### Imagine and the Curriculum for Excellence

We are working hard to ensure that your theatre trip offers you a real opportunity to meet the outcomes and experiences of **Curriculum for Excellence**, not just for Expressive Arts, but in other core areas such as Literacy and Health & Wellbeing.

#### ***My learning in, through and about the expressive arts:***

- *Enables me to **experience** the inspiration and power of the arts*
- *Recognises and nurtures my **creative** and aesthetic talents*
- *Provides opportunities for me to deepen my **understanding** of culture in Scotland and the wider world*
- *Is enhanced and enriched through **partnerships** with professional arts companies, creative adults and cultural organisations.*

By attending our performance you are already ensuring that your pupils are experiencing high quality performance art and becoming aware of culture in Scotland and the wider world.

Our follow up activities support pupils' creativity, their ability to evaluate and appreciate art, ensure that you are making links with professional arts organizations such as Imagine and offer rich opportunity for creative and functional writing and expressive arts outputs.

### Preparing children before the performance

It may seem obvious, but the work you do in preparing your class for their visit to the festival will greatly enhance their overall experience, build excitement and enthusiasm for the performance and generate more meaningful discussion and follow up work. Follow our suggested activities to get started.

#### **Synopsis**

It is important that children know the name of the performance they are coming to see and have a general idea what it is about. Prepare your class for the performance by reading them the synopsis in your programme and talking to them about what they are going to see. Understanding their expectations will help you to explore their reactions after the performance.

### **Think, pair, share**

Ask the children to think about the title of the performance they are going to see and what it means to them. Discuss their thoughts in pairs and then share their ideas with the rest of the class.

### **Learning about another country**

If you are coming to see one of our international performances why not use it as an opportunity for some class research about that country? Discuss the nationality of the performing company. What do you know about the country? What language do they speak? Do they have any traditions, folk tales or special delicacies that you could investigate before the performance?

While all performances are translated into English, international companies may have strong accents and it could be worthwhile preparing the children for this.

### **Theatre Experience**

Taking children and young people to a performance in a theatre allows them to see a performance at its best, with full lighting and sound, but it can be a frightening experience for some younger children. It might be worthwhile trying some activities to prepare the children for the dark theatre, bright lights and loud noises they may experience during the performance. A game where pupils have their eyes covered and are given objects to touch, smell, listen to etc. may help. Or try putting the lights out in the classroom and asking pupils to listen to a piece of music or a story and discuss the experience with them.

For children who have never been to a theatre before, ask them what they are expecting it to be like and talk about how they think they will need to behave. We want children and young people to feel relaxed and respond to the performances, but it is important to understand why it is important to listen and respect the performers.

## **Activities after the performance**

There are a number of possible approaches to follow up work. We have suggested ideas relating to Literacy, Expressive Arts (drama) and Expressive Arts (visual art). You may choose to link into existing projects or better yet create a project around the performance you are coming to see.

### **Reflecting on the experience**

Whatever activities you choose we believe the starting point for meaningful follow up work lies in taking time to reflect, remember and discuss the performance you saw. Making time to reflect on the experience after attending a performance can help extend children's overall experience, develop their critical thinking skills and answer questions they may have.

### **Memory map**

A useful way to begin your discussion is to simply ask your class to share as many memories as they can about the performance. It is very important that this is not made to feel like a test, but just a chance to share. If it helps think about the performance as separate elements:

- **The characters**

Who did we meet? What were they like? What did they wear? What did they do?

- **The story**  
What was it about? What happened? Where did it take place? How did it make us feel?
- **The performance**  
What did the show look like? What did we see? Was there music? What was it like?

### **Further discussion – evaluating the performance**

Further discussion will encourage pupils to reflect on and evaluate their own response to the performance, and help them develop a critical response. We have developed an interactive online tool where your class will be guided through a step-by-step process by an animated theatre critic.

The questions below are given as a starting point for reflecting on the experience.

- Did anything surprise you in the performance?
- Did the story remind you of anything that you have read or heard before?
- Which character did you like the best? What made them your favourite? Is there anything you'd like to know about this character that wasn't told in the performance?
- Were there any other bits of the story or characters that you would like to find out more about?
- Is there anything you would change about the show?
- Do you think other people in the audience liked the show? What makes you think that?

## **Expressive Arts Activities (Drama)**

### **Actions Game**

A great way to consolidate memories about the performance is by playing a version of the game, *Captain's Coming*. To play the game, take the characters and key incidents/places from the story and create frozen pictures or actions to accompany them. Teacher calls out commands and pupils respond with actions. For example if the play was about a King who lived alone when suddenly an alien space ship landed and took him to Mars you might have some actions like this:

King in his castle: Pupils make a frozen image of a King looking lonely / grumpy / happy (depending on the type of character he was)

Aliens on the loose: Pupils move around the space pretending to be the aliens from the show

Spaceship taking off: Pupils act out the countdown and blast-off moment

The game then becomes competitive with anyone not doing the correct movements or being too slow going out. The key to the game is using your own and the pupils' imagination to recall moments you saw and perhaps create moments you did not see but think were important.

### **Playing it out**

Give pupils an opportunity to recreate the performance or retell the story in their own way. How you do this will depend on the abilities of your group and the type of performance you saw but some ideas include:

- A series of still images reflecting key moments in the performance
- A news report that recounts the story in a formal way
- A straight re-enactment of a favourite moment (be very clear that pupils must pick one moment to re-enact or you will end up with some very long scenes!)
- A 2minute version of the entire piece (this activity is more suitable for older / more experienced children and will require some creative thinking and problem solving)
- A short drama on what happened after we left or before we came along.

## Expressive Arts Activities (Visual Art)

### Drawing and Talking

The combination of drawing and talking helps children make sense of and extend their own creative thoughts about a story and characters as well as allowing them to explore the technical aspects of a theatre performance.

- Begin by asking pupils to draw something they remember or thought of during the performance;
- Discuss the drawings using open ended questions to allow children the opportunity to share details of their drawings.
- Create a drawing gallery, memory book or memory wall where the work can be displayed. Encourage children to look at each other's work, talk about the pictures and give feedback.
- Expand your gallery or memory wall with written work, images of the performance or information about the company from the internet, or create a play corner or small world with items relating to the performance or make a set model using recycled materials.

## Literacy Activities

### Creative writing – stories within the story

Try getting the class to tell a new story inspired by the performance, or even just retell a particular part of the story in their own words. The questions below might help stimulate ideas:

- What do you think happened in the story before we came along?
- What do you think might happen next?
- If you could have played one of the characters in the performance which one would you be and why?
- What things might have happened to that character that we didn't find out about?
- If you were asked to rewrite the ending how would you change it?

These stories can be presented as poetry, a comic strip, a drama script, or a piece of prose depending on the interests / abilities of your individual pupils.

### Writing for a specific purpose – theatre reviews

Following the discussion, ask your class to write a review of the performance they saw. This could link in with some research work into the style of a theatre review. For some useful tips, download arts critic Mary Brennan's guide on writing theatre reviews on our website.