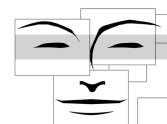


Theatre NEMO



achieving good mental health and wellbeing for all

HMP Barlinnie The Slipper Factory 2008– Monitoring and Evaluation Summary

From questionnaire hand-outs by prison staff

Project

A fifteen-week short film project in Barlinnie prison. Early exercises included initial group building drama workshops and trust exercises, before developing into scriptwriting and storyboarding as well as work on physical and vocal awareness and the communication of emotions relating to individuals and the group as a whole. Alongside these were workshops in digital sound production which included vocal work and the exploration of social and emotional concepts through sound composition. The end product was shown to an audience.

Aims

Objectives were to raise levels of confidence and self esteem in individuals, as well as developing interpersonal skills in a group setting.

Outcomes

The feedback was generated through three methods:

- Audience feedback sheets – containing space for comments and details such as name, organisation and email. These included invited audience from various groups and initiatives as well as other prisoners
- Participation feedback – containing evaluation forms and testimonials
- Project report from Nemo staff.

Audience Feedback – 33 received

Of 33 forms received, 27 were from professionals working in similar sectors. The remaining 6 were from fellow inmates.

Audience response was unanimously positive both from outside visitors and inmates. A number of comments suggested that audience members were familiar with the company's work through previous events which they "have enjoyed immensely" and found this to be "no different" in terms of quality. For one audience member the previous production "stayed with me for weeks, not a day went past that I didn't think of it." This suggests the ongoing relationships with the company and other groups, and would suggest that the reputation of the company is regarded very highly. In terms of the context of the work, a recurring comment was the praise in "giving a voice" to the participants, and the observation that "the crippling thing is to be without voice. You give voice to the silence" and give the opportunity to "get guys talking."

There were many references to mental health issues from the 27 audience members from various other mental health groups, support staff and criminal justice workers. Comments included:

- "Provides a sense of hope for those unfortunate enough to experience mental health challenges"
- "Gives insight into the difficulties and frustration found by anyone with mental health issues."
- "Chaos in your head is not easy to deal with, this was communicated very strongly"
- "A moving depiction of a young man's state of mind."

This is very positive in suggesting professionals working in the same or similar sectors hold the company in high esteem.

The artistry of the work was commended, with audience members noting the atmosphere that was created as “moving,” “emotional” or “bleak,” with some even finding the material “uncomfortable,” “tense” and “hard-hitting”. However this was commented on positively and would seem that the tone was relevant and appreciated. There was also a high frequency of comments that mentioned how “thought provoking” the piece was.

“A harrowing, haunting and truly thought provoking piece of work, one which will lead its audience to face some uncomfortable truths.”

There were some references to the “isolation” and “alienation” felt by individuals represented in the performance and this was an “especially close representation,” especially in the exploration of ideas of “frustration.” In this respect, the investigation into emotions and how to portray them seems to have been successful:

“The thoughts and emotions expressed really made me think”

“Gave good expression of frustrations and barriers faced daily”

Above all the audience members spoke well of the achievement of the participants, and again it seems that the initial aims in giving confidence to the participants were realised:

“I love seeing the confidence and joy in the performers”

“I could see the effect on all the individual actors - beaming with pride and achievement. This will hopefully reinforce their confidence in a positive way”

“Very well put together and a good achievement for all involved”

“I love seeing the prisoners convey, express their ideas, images, emotions in this way”

The only negative comments were from three audience members who found the dialogue was “difficult to make out.” It was suggested that this may be down “to the venue.”

Participant Feedback

From the feedback received, responses were generally positive.

The evaluation sheets contained set questions:

Question	Percentage of participant's responses			
	Fully	Mostly	Partly	Not at all
To what extent did the event meet its aims and objectives?	100			
Do you feel you have learned any new skills?	51	49		
Do you have more enthusiasm?	100			
Are you more able to communicate?	50		50	
Did you enjoy the workshop?	100			
Would you attend Theatre Nemo workshops or events in the community?	100			

	1	2	3	4	5
How would you rate your confidence on a scale of 1-5 before the workshop? (1= very good, 5= very poor)			50	50	
How would you rate your confidence on a scale of 1-5 after the workshop? (1= very good, 5= very poor)	50	50			

From the above it is clear that enjoyment, achievement, enthusiasm and recommendation are all highly scored. It is also clear that overall confidence in the individuals have improved.

Comments were made that at first it was “quite daunting” and that they “weren’t sure about it,” however through the experience they found that “we got there in the end” and that there was a sense of pride “once we saw how it had all come together.” There was also a sense of achievement in terms of learning something new such as the technology or a new concept such as learning lines. Other comments included:

- “Taking part in Theatre Nemo has made me feel as if I’ve accomplished something.”
- “There has been an exceptionally high level of involvement and hands on project.”
- “I’ve learned about camera shots, angles and also the sound and the input of that side of the film.”
- “Learning the use of the laptop was an eye opener and what you can do with it to make a film.”
- “I would recommend Theatre Nemo to anyone as it’s made me feel as if I’ve been part of something good.”
- “Theatre Nemo has helped me through my time in the prison as it gave me something to concentrate on and made my time pass quicker.”
- “Made me feel like I have achieved something, especially at the end once we saw how it had all come together.”
- “It also helped build my confidence as standing in front of a camera is quite a daunting experience and proved quite difficult to do but we got there in the end.”

Facilitator feedback

Both facilitators commented on the positive use of drama games and trust exercises in the early stages of the project and how these were necessary in building a group dynamic. It was noted that the “vocal delivery” of participants “continued to grow” as well as their confidence in front of the camera.

Challenges included working in a hostile environment; however the expertise of the facilitators was valuable in maintaining a positive atmosphere using encouragement and optimistic expression.

Suggestions were made to develop links between participants and their families/communities outside of their environment, as well as continuing engagement with art projects after release. This would seem constructive given the feedback from the participants contained references to learning new skills.

Summary and suggestions

From the comments above it would seem that the company achieved their aims in helping the participants feel more confident and have more self-esteem, which was noted positively by the audience, as well as the participants.

Suggested further activity would be to encourage continued participation in similar projects when inmates are released. Staff, audience and participants themselves have noted this. Other frequent suggestions were to publicise the material on DVD by sending it to relevant companies and individuals and to continue putting this work out there to continue to educate participants and audiences alike.