



REPORT

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Break Free Workshops

**Borders Youth Theatre
&
Interest Link**



borders
YOUTH
theatre

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PROLOGUE

The Show was devised and inspired by last year's project. The rehearsal schedule, the show and the structure were based on the feedback from last year's participants. I feel we listened and learned and were able to offer an even more fulfilling and complete experience as a result.



PLOT INSPIRATIONS:

“It’s Coldstream and it’s cold, the local Moll has opened the first cabaret bar in the Scottish borders. Mindy had beautiful eyes; one eye was so beautiful it couldn’t help looking at the other. Her beautiful Brunette hair went all down her back, shame there was none on her head. The town folk couldn’t keep away. The lock-ins were legendary. The drinks were flowing and the music was playing. Everyone was excited and ready for a good night. But all is not right at the Coldstream Cabaret Club. Tension is in the air. Trouble is brewing. Someone had stolen all the week's savings from Mindy’s safe. Who would steal from Mindy? No one is leaving the club tonight until we find out who is causing all the trouble.



The cast could help choose and develop the story, the characters and their roles within the story. The plot and characters could be flexible. They could develop the script and use improvisation to create a fun, unique, immersive experience. They could use the cabaret stage to show their talents. The chance to shine.



The tech crew could design and make a set, make and source props and costumes, help with lighting, and front of house.



The audience could be as much a part of the show as the cast and crew, they could get a unique and immersive experience and could be fully involved in the story and in solving the crime..

Project



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- To devise, create and perform a show inspired by the theme. “Coldstream Cabaret Club” set in the 1920’s.
- To build and create as much of the set, props as possible and where possible use recyclable material.
- Use play and drama games to bond the group. Use drama games to break down inhibitions, to build trust and group dynamics and encourage play and creativity
- Use vocal exercises and improvisation to develop theatre and performance skills
- Use physical games, play and warm-ups to develop a connection to body and mind
- Cast choose their characters and develop their roles.
- Cast choose the plot twists and turns
- Cast choose songs
- Cast help develop script
- Crafters develop ideas for set and decoration and create

PURPOSE

- To build confidence and self-belief
- To develop performance skills in voice
- Explore and grow acting skills
- Build a script from page to stage
- Explore characterisation and back stories
- To overcome barriers that prevent learning and growth
- To be more physically active
- To develop skills and confidence to be heard by a large audience
- Connecting voice and breath
- Developing articulation and projection
- To have your ideas and opinions valued and developed into the show



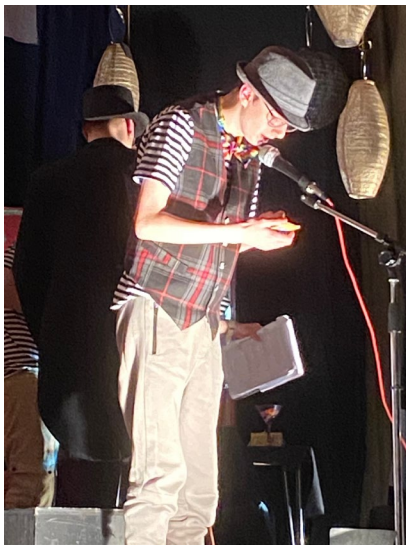
- To develop emotional resilience and understanding learning requires failure
- Develop emotional empathy when working in a large group
- To share the space and ideas with a large group.
- Develop reading skills
- Develop memory skills
- Develop singing skills
- Build confidence in personal communication of opinions, ideas, emotions, challenges & problems
- Build on concentration and focus skills
- Creative problem solving
- Visual creativity and dexterity
- Adaptability
- Resilience
- Self – discipline
- Positive self-image
- Emotional development
- Following deadlines and timelines
- Motivation and commitment
- Self-motivation
- Dedication
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Practice fine motor skills
- Boost cognitive skills
- Improve mental health
- Improve self-image
- Improve physical health
- Improve self esteem
- Tadah!!!



Report on the Impact of the Coldstream Cabaret Club project

Performing arts positively impacts people with additional needs by improving self-expression, communication skills and confidence, while also promoting social skill development, physical health and emotional wellbeing. It can help reduce stress, build relationships and enhance cognitive functions like memory and special awareness.

This initiative serves as an example of how performing arts can positively impact individuals facing unique and divergent challenges.



Engagement & Development

In the early weeks the group easily and comfortably settled into roles and responsibilities. We did set clear Codes of Conduct to ensure a safe, healthy environment where all could have a safe space to learn and grow. We set out a clear structure of group warm-up and bonding for the whole group and then separating into chosen areas. However, no one was forced to do anything that made them feel uncomfortable. Although all were encouraged to try new activities and experiences, this was not demanded. A holistic and nurturing atmosphere was created. We encouraged supporting each other and developing kindness to themselves. We encouraged empathy, we encouraged resilience. We encouraged ideas to be shared without judgment. We encouraged individuality and teamwork. We encouraged tolerance. We expected care and respect at all times. We made it clear that opinions and emotions were valued deeply. We recognised individuals' diverse needs not as barriers to participation but as unique contributions that enrich the theatrical experience. It was our job as leaders to find new, innovative and creative ways to make theatre more inclusive. We learnt most of these skills from listening and learning from the participants.

Codes of Conduct

We ask that you read this, listen carefully, and support us in our efforts to ensure that we provide a safe, positive, and supportive environment for all.

- Participants must behave responsibly and are expected to take guidance from project leaders.
- **Consideration, courtesy and respect** should be shown at all times to everyone. We are all equal.
- Participants **must not use any form of violence** towards others, either physical, gestures or verbal.
- **Everyone is entitled to have their own point of view** - participants should always try to understand these.
- **Do not create or encourage environments where we allow ourselves to ostracise or ignore others for differences of personality or opinion.**
- Participants should always show **friendship, kindness and care** to others.
- We request that you **try not to disrupt** other people's activities.
- We expect you to help create a supportive environment where all can thrive
- No bullying of any kind, online, verbal or physical, will be tolerated.
- Food should not be eaten whilst doing an activity
- Chewing gum should not be eaten whilst doing an activity.
- This is a safe space for all. No tolerance for the cruelty of others' personal beliefs and beings.

Allow our differences to be our strength, NOT our weakness



Workshops were broken into a group activity, building our trust and understanding with each other. Clear understanding of what happening that day. Physical, vocal warm up's. Improvisation, rehearsals. Each week the performers developed drama skills and confidence. Building on voice, physical awareness, characterisation and creative thinking. Participants watched videos to inspire, get an understanding and a feel of the 1920's and Bugsy Malone helped inspire the drama and the fun. We took time to understand the format. Who done it? The cast quickly dived into the project, choosing ideas for their characters. Creating back stories and crimes. The cast also had great fun choosing the songs and music for the show. This collaborative approach encouraged collective ownership of the performance and personal investment.

The script was built week by week as I was inspired by the cast's ideas, characters and plot twists. Their words, their ideas. The script was developed over 8 weeks.

The Crafters, worked diligently using materials sourced and found where possible to create table decorations, instruments, hall decorations and later set to help create an experience for the audience as soon as they entered the hall.

The project encouraged

1. ****Personal Growth****: Participants exhibited improved emotional resilience and self-confidence as they navigated the challenges of theatre production.
2. ****Communication Skills****: Engaging in group discussions, voicing opinions, reading or learning and performing script and improvisation all enhanced their verbal and non-verbal communication, forging stronger connections among members. Engaging with a large group and audience allowed participants to develop confidence in articulating their opinions and emotions. This experience was invaluable, preparing them for personal communication in various aspects of their lives.
3. ****Self-Expression and Creativity****: The freedom to explore character choices and storylines nurtured individual creativity and self-expression.
4. ****Physical and Vocal Techniques****: Regular practice of physical theatre and vocal exercises has honed skills in body language, vocal projection, and clarity, crucial for performance. Participants became more physically active through rehearsals, warm up games and the physical performances. The stamina of rehearsals and the focus. All this contributed to improved overall health.
5. ****Hand-Eye Coordination and Dexterity****: Creating props and participating in physical drama activities improved participants' hand eye co-ordination and motor skills.
6. ****Creative writing and creative thinking****. Turning thoughts and ideas into a narrative

7. ****Problem Solving and Empathy****: Collaboratively working toward a common goal has sharpened participants' problem-solving abilities while cultivating empathy through shared experiences.

8. ****Teamwork****: The project has reinforced the importance of collaboration as participants worked together to bring their vision to life.

9. ****Facing new challenges and self-esteem****

Participants reported a marked increase in self-esteem and belief in their capabilities. Overcoming personal barriers allowed them to express themselves creatively. Many participants noted an improvement in their self-image, contributing to their overall mental health and emotional well-being. Confronting personal challenges also reinforced their commitment and motivation.

10 ****Development of Performance Skills****

Engaging in drama games and acting exercises helped individuals enhance theatre and performance skills while exploring characterization and backstories, contributing to a deeper understanding of their roles.

11. ****Friendships****

The project fostered friendships, and numerous instances of emotional support were noted, which strengthened their social bonds and facilitated a sense of belonging.

12 ****Emotional Resilience****

Learning that failure is part of the artistic process helped participants develop emotional resilience. They discovered that persistence can lead to improvement and mastery.

13. ****Cognitive Development****

Additionally, skills associated with numeracy, reading, memory, and cognitive processing were enhanced through learning lines and lyrics, through remembering blocking and developing special awareness in relation to stage, audience and each other

14. ****Creative Problem Solving****

The necessity to adapt quickly during rehearsals and performances nurtured creative problem-solving skills and enhanced adaptability through on-the-spot thinking.

15 ****Positive Self-Image and Emotional Development****



Venue:

We were forced to find a new venue quickly as we received a call letting us know that the Coldstream Community hall was being renovated.

We were lucky to hire the Coldstream Primary School as the posters had already been designed and the title of “Coldstream Cabaret Club” did not need changed. Kiera the poster designer updated the venue for us quickly.

We then discovered that the Primary school had no lights, Borders Youth Theatre’s David Bissett lent us lights, set them up and took them down for us, also giving us his time and expertise. We are grateful he did this, but if we are at a venue without lights, we must consider the costs of hiring lights, as this was done out of kindness.

As Kate and Esther both focused on set and props with Tina and Lisa as this was needed. I focused on running workshops, devising and rehearsals show with the cast. I was delighted when Kate Smith offered to help with Stage management. I feel with the size of this production and complexities of sound effects, music and songs it was something I could not do without. I needed to focus my energies on stage with cast and Kat was able to help me with all tech and props. She also became invaluable to help with warm-ups, rehearsing with individuals and all other activities as needed. I must emphasise that as productions grow, so does the need for a good team of people to ensure this is done professionally and safely for the best experience for all. We were again very lucky that the kindness of strangers helped us to manage.

PARTICIPANTS:

Some participants and some volunteers struggled to understand the need for commitment and the need for practice. This meant that I was often running rehearsals with missing cast members or volunteers.

LEADERS:

The main leaders worked ridiculously hard in workshops and out of workshops to achieve what was created. It was almost too much to ask. It was the love of what we do and our desire for the cast and crafter to shine that pushed everyone through

The Kindness of Strangers

It was truly with the kindness of strangers we were able to create a theatre experience of quality. All productions cost a lot of money and we tried to reduce costs where possible:

Thanks to:

Barbara Walker, she came and styled people's hair for that special touch

Lily Peden, she helped with make-up making people feel cared for and special

Nicola Corbett, gave her time to help teach signing and help front of house

Karen Robertson: helped find cardboard, set, helped drive participants to and from venue, helped front of house.

Eula Wilkin: sewing, helped with organising costume and dressing

David Bissett: Donated lighting, expertise and time

Coldstream Community centre: auditorium dressing – borrow queue barriers

Ednam House: auditorium dressing - borrowed red carpet

Duns Play Fest: Set – borrowed blacks for set and table clothes

Stewarts / Tweeddale furniture: set – sourced Cardboard

DH Prints: Some free prints

Cross Keys: Props – borrowed round trays

Coldstream Charity Shop – borrowed costume

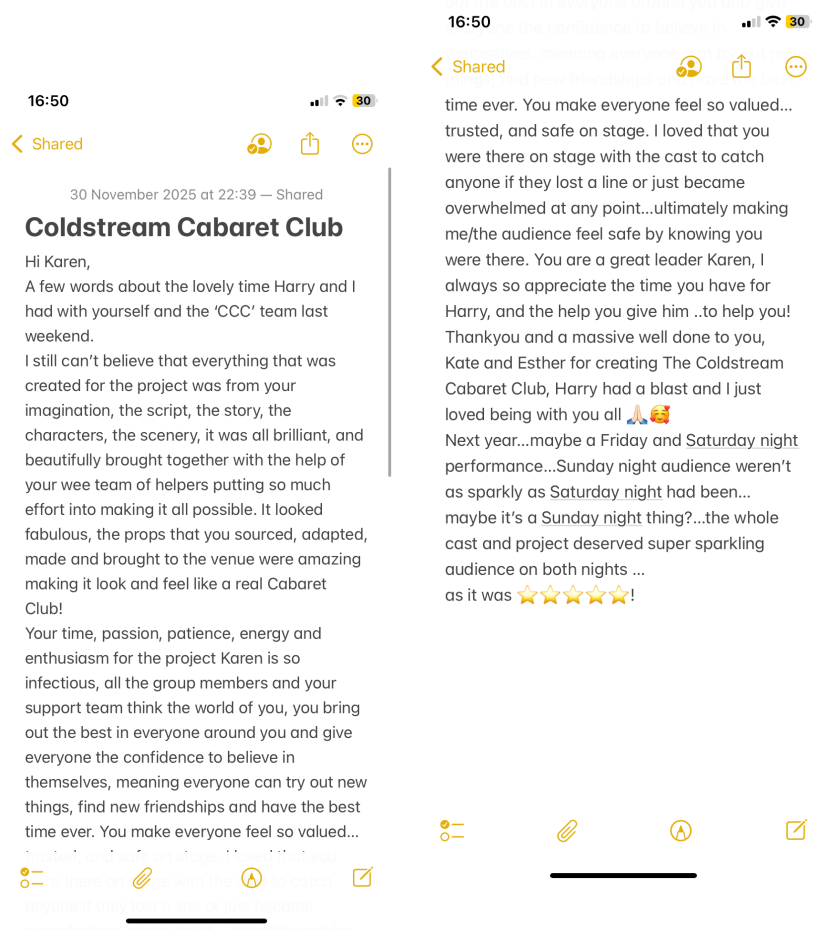
Sainsbury's – snacks table – allowed sale or return on unopened items

Pattersons Paints - paint

family

leader

Enjoyed show & said people in Coldstream coop said how good show was . (Audience)



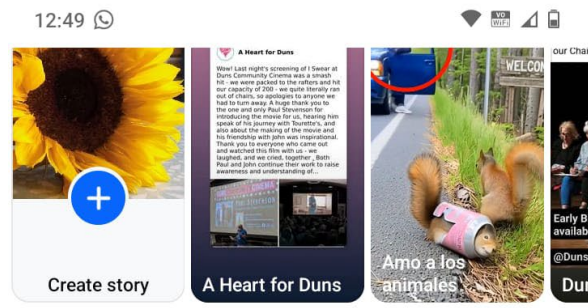
Stage looked great AUDIENCE

“How uplifting”, “how talented the cast were” and “the hall looked amazing” ...AUDIENCE

“Loved it” (AUDIENCE)

“Just brilliant” AUDIENCE

“I loved it...iv actually got a sore face from smiling all through the show” (AUDIENCE)



Coldstream (Scottish Borders) Co...

Nuin Supranova · 3h ·

The Coldstream Cabaret Club by Borders Youth Theatre at Coldstream Primary School tonight was absolutely excellent. Don't know who to tag to let them know.

What a fantastic group of people coming together to write, perform, build all the props and host such a fun play.

The singing was brilliant and they all did fabulously well. A credit to themselves and to each other.

Well done to all, we really enjoyed ourselves and had such a good laugh.

It's on again tonight (Sunday 23rd November) and starts at 6pm, so be there bang on 6pm. Entry is by donation. At Coldstream Primary School. — with **Geoff Levy** at **Coldstream. Birth place of the Regiment.**



3,332 VISITS

More sparkles, sequins and glitter clothes. Not to have white lights but rainbow lights on us. Glow in the dark bracelets. Put dance music on quietly when cast talking CAST

Tim, Tam and Tom had a lot of words

Loved this show more

Good show to watch

Good doing 2 shows

Everyone performed well

Good storyline

Aidan singing was good

Would like more time to get ready on show days

Liked building my confidence

There was more crafts to do this year. It was a lot!

I liked making friends

I have more confidence

I have a lot of anxiety, helped me control getting upset or wound up

Would like to choose own clothes more

Like the Michael Jackson stuff, my idea

I have never done it before . I didn't know I could do it

My family were so proud of me

Taught me how to get on better with others

I think people are talking about me, I need to believe in myself

I did it for my dad. He would have been proud.

I felt like a star

I liked the funny bits

I liked being the baddy

I liked telling jokes

My feedback

Venue: The venue was good, proper space for dressing rooms, kind janitors, space to relax and the hall size excellent. Next year I hope to affiliate with Coldstream primary school, this will reduce our costs greatly. Please note I have offered the school free drama workshops to say thank you. The community helps us, so I feel it only fair to give back.

SET: I feel a lot more money went into paper, crafts, than was needed. I should have had a clearer idea of resource and use of these resources to help reduce costs.

CAST: I feel a lot of people who would benefit from such projects aren't getting the opportunity for various reasons. I would consider offering free tickets to service providers, clubs that support people with additional needs. We are representing people with additional needs, I would like them to see their friends and see what is possible.

STAGEMANAGER: If I cannot get someone to volunteer or act as stage manager with only expenses being paid I would consider if the project gets any larger a stage manager would be a vital addition to the team.

CRAFTS: The crafters felt there was a lot for them to do. Reaching out and finding more people who would like to be involved in the crafting, designing side and technical side of production would be beneficial.

EXTRAS: Extra needs like managing dressing, costumes, make-up, hair , front of house, all take bodies. I will ensure a good volunteer base to cover these needs is noted from first production meeting. (please note we did contact the college and hairdressers, but managed only to get one lovely professional to help with hair, she enjoyed it soo much, she would come again).

STRUCTURE: As the only leader for the performers, I was often spending time managing social skills, communication and emotional needs. I feel this is a part of my job, as it would be in any workshop, however, when I was on my own this felt overwhelming. I will ensure I also have a supporting adult with me in the rehearsal room.

I was delighted with the team spirit created within the group, the growth and journey of each individual. I was amazed by what I learned from them and how they helped me understand how to help them succeed. I was delighted that this was a show to be enjoyed for itself and it was made more amazing because of how these people had

overcome challenges, anxieties and fears. They learnt new skills, developed old, built on what they had learned last year and sparkled all the more.

It was a team effort

And we certainly all got by with a little help from our friends.

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GOING FORWARD:

We will arrange to meet the group before Christmas to watch the show, eat the leftover sweets and hand out certificates of achievement. I will get more feedback on what this group would like to do moving forward and share this with you. I hope you will join us.