

Projects supported by the Trust and delivered by Sunderland Empire Creative Learning and Community Partnerships (CLCP)

CURIOUS CONNECTIONS YOUTH THEATRE

In April 2019, **Sunderland Empire's Creative Learning and Community Partnerships** team received £2500, the highest honor at the **Tyne & Wear High Sheriff Awards** in recognition of **Curious Connections** youth theatre for young people with additional needs such as Autism (ASC).

Curious Connections is a group attended by an extraordinary group of young people who meet weekly at Sunderland Empire to take part in drama and performance activities, and most importantly, to have fun with friends. The group provides the opportunity for young people to work with theatre professionals, and produce work for both peer and mainstream audiences; using theatre and performance to not only nurture artistic abilities but also to develop transferrable skills for life.



High Sheriff Awards Scheme complements the work of the High Sheriff, an unpaid, voluntary role appointed by Her Majesty the Queen, which today concentrates on upholding and supporting the judiciary, police and law enforcement agencies, emergency services, local authorities and all recognised church and faith groups as well as supporting and encouraging the voluntary sector. The award recognises young people for their positive contributions to our communities.

The outstanding Autism work in Sunderland over the past 6 years has previously been recognised, with the team winning The National Autism Professional Award, and The Action for Children's Arts Members Award, also as winners of the Autism Professional Award in 2017 in the alternative education category for their work.

The award will enable Curious Connections to continue to engage in exciting opportunities such as National Theatre Connections this year. Experiences like this truly support the social development of these young people, support their aspirations and also pushes the boundaries and preconceptions on what these young people can achieve.

YOUTH MUSIC 'SOUNDS OF SUNDERLAND'

During SMH's SEND School Music Network meeting in 2018 (attended by teachers from SEN/D schools) it was highlighted that there was a lack of music making opportunities for young people with special educational needs in Sunderland.

Together with Sunderland Music Hub, CLCP aimed to increase music making opportunities for young people with SEN/D by establishing and nurturing music ensembles in their school settings through '**Sounds of Sunderland**' a £30,000 project funded by Youth Music.



Sounds of Sunderland engaged 104 of children from SEN/D schools in the area in music making sessions, and successfully developed 4 core groups of 10 students in 4 schools in Sunderland: Sunningdale School, Colombia Grange, Portland Academy and Northview Academy.

The sessions were led by local musicians to exploring sounds, rhythm, and composition by utilising music technology and digital instruments (iPads, Skoog and Charanga) in conjunction with traditional instruments throughout the project.

Seeing how iPad and other technology can fit with more traditional instruments means that my rock bands now can have students with more diverse needs joining in even more than before! – Teacher

Participants visited a series of sites in the city, collecting “found sounds” from each location to create an original composition on the sounds of Sunderland. Sites included Holy Trinity Church, Sunderland Empire, and Roker Beach.

The project also connected to Royal Philharmonic Orchestra; with CLCP organising the opportunity for young people and teachers on the project to experience an in school concert with an Octet of musicians in their schools. This was extremely well received by teachers across our schools.

Sounds of Sunderland has given me a bit more confidence to embark on musical journeys with the children, which would both stimulate and engage all involved. Taking part has also given me incentive to look for other ways to musically engage the children, rather than use the excuse that I am not an accomplished musician myself to opt out! – Teacher

The project culminated in a final performance at Sunderland College. Many of our young people had never performed previously. The Sounds of Sunderland performance was attended by representatives of cultural organisations across the city as well as by parents and teachers of the young people involved.

UNSUNG HEROES OF WWI

Project Aim(s): To connect the local community to the East End's Holy Trinity Church by recording the names of fallen soldiers to preserve Sunderland's First World War history, which will be exhibited at Holy Trinity Church when it reopens to the public in 2020.

September 2018 – February 2019

CLCP have been working alongside The Lake Poets' Martin Longstaff, and over 100 pupils from Grangetown Primary and Hudson Road Primary schools since September 2018. The groups at both schools have been researching the Great War with the goal of writing their own original songs to honour WWI soldiers who never returned home to Sunderland.



As part of the project the schools embarked on educational visits to Holy Trinity Church where they learned from members of the Holy Trinity Ambassador Group about the history of the building, as well as of wider histories from Sunderland's wartime past.

The youngsters also connected to War Horse in light of its poignant WWI themes. The groups went to see the play at Sunderland Empire, and took part in the Page to Stage Event



for schools on Wednesday 13th February in order to gain closer insight into the development of the production.

The project came to an inspirational close in February, when the schools shared their original compositions Thank You and We Will Remember with an audience of their peers at Sunderland Minster. Representatives from National Theatre's War Horse Team, and Churches Conservation Trust (Holy Trinity Church) were also in attendance.

The emotive performances were accompanied by Martin on guitar and Janet Nettleton from No Limits Theatre on the flute and were fantastically well received.

Funding for the project was secured by Sunderland Empire's Creative learning & Community Partnerships team.

Outcomes and Legacy:

The songs have been recorded and will be exhibited in Holy Trinity Church's Library and War Memorial for future visitors to experience and enjoy. The compositions will also be uploaded to Charanga, an online music resource for classroom teachers, for all primary schools in Sunderland to access as inspiration for future WWI and local history topics.

BEYOND THE BANDPIT

Beyond The Band Pit is a two year project lead by Sunderland Empire in partnership with Sunderland Music Hub. The project aims to enhance the regions Music offer to young people within the city.

Partners in Sunderland are working with local & national cultural organisations including National Theatre, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Sunderland Music Education Hub to develop an exemplary programme of music learning activity that connects a diverse range of participants.

The programme runs through multiple delivery strands across a 2 years and will seek to engage those with greatest need.



Local and National partners will come together to share collective and organisational insight gathered through the process.



This summer brought the end of our BTBP delivery in Secondary schools across Sunderland. It ended with an intimate gig setting held on the Sunderland Empire Stage where families, friends and colleagues were able to watch local musicians and groups newly created original songs inspired from local folk music and their visit to see War Horse. This also included a performance from the Lake Poets, Marty Longstaff who'd been working with the groups as well as Bob Fox the original Songman from War Horse. Feedback from teachers and students was incredible and lay foundations for future events like this in the future.

JOHN WILLIAMS GALA



Sunderland Empire Theatre Trust have generously further supported BTBP by giving a further 5k support to the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra to support their return to Sunderland Empire in 2020. This enabled and supports an ambitious wrap around learning programme supported by Arts Council England which will engage a local music group *Houghton Area Youth Band* giving them an exciting and rare opportunity to compose an inspired piece of music that will be performed on our stage alongside the RPO during their now confirmed concert on **Friday 6 March 2020**.