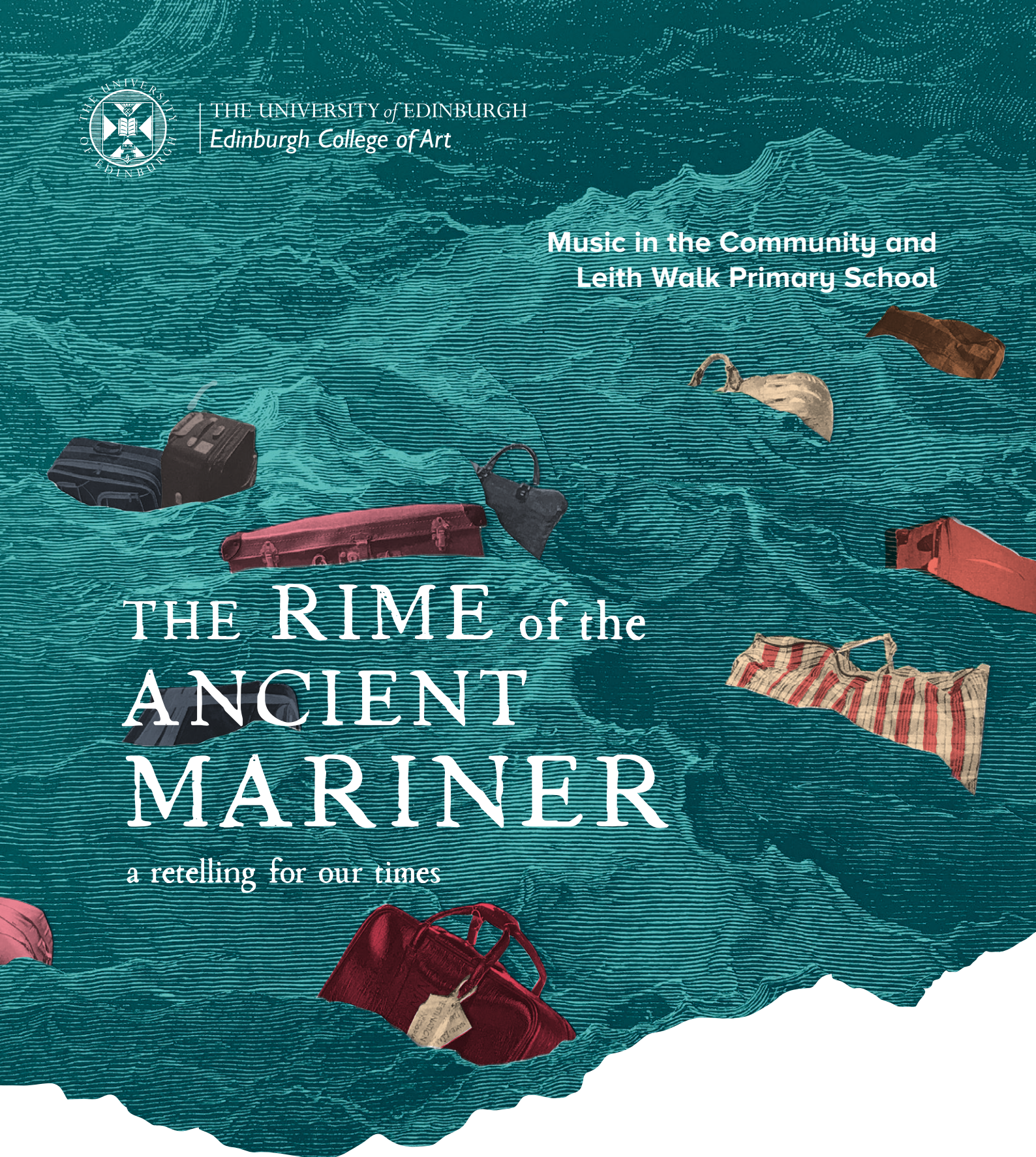




THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

Music in the Community and
Leith Walk Primary School



THE RIME of the
ANCIENT
MARINER

a retelling for our times

Project Report

Dee Isaacs • Artistic Director

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, directed by John Bett, is a contemporary retelling of Coleridge's epic poem written in 1797–8. The story tells of a man facing the elements on his perilous journey to discover what it is to be human. For this production, the music was composed by Dee Isaacs and films made by Ian Dodds. The libretto was especially written by award-winning writer Gerda Stevenson who produced a powerful narrative that engaged with the young performers and was relevant to the contemporary refugee crisis.

In this version, the ancient mariner takes the audience from a wedding scene, to the treacherous waters, where displaced children are fleeing from war and conflict. When a magnificent albatross flies over the boat, the ancient mariner slays the bird and curses the children who perish in a storm. Haunted by death, the mariner sails on and learns to love all living creatures, becoming wiser to life and what it is to be human. He is finally saved and returns to the wedding feast, where he reminds the audience of refugees who have made the dangerous voyage to escape conflict.



Introduction

Between January and March 2018, 60 pupils from Leith Walk Primary School in Edinburgh participated in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* production, the 12th successive project led by the Music in the Community department at the University of Edinburgh. Established in 1991, by Professor Nigel Osborne, Music in the Community responded to a growing need for accessible music throughout the local community. Now led by Dee Isaacs at the Reid School of Music, the course continues to promote music as an educational, therapeutic, artistic and social tool and is centred on the core principle that we all maintain the innate ability to participate in and make music. Through the unique partnership between the University of Edinburgh and a rolling cohort of local primary schools, Dee Isaacs and Music in the Community stage ground breaking initiatives that bring inspiring and creative experiences to children across the city.



Leith Walk Primary School is situated in a culturally diverse area of Edinburgh and aims to provide high quality education to all. 45% of the pupils are bilingual and a total of 40 languages are spoken across the school. Music in the Community actively integrated with the school's vision of creating cultural richness out of diversity, offering the opportunity for these many cultures and traditions to work towards a shared goal. The children were immersed in a creative process: making music, developing listening and collaborative skills, and discovering how

the elements of music, dance, visual art and design combine to create a performance.



The new production of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was conceived by composer Dee Isaacs and staged at the Playfair Library and Old College Quad at the University of Edinburgh, with the support of a professional production team. The pupils worked intensively over a period of three months with undergraduate Music in the Community students and an interdisciplinary team of professional artists, including musicians from West Africa. The performance, which ran for four consecutive nights in March, represented the finale of a three year engagement with Leith Walk Primary School, through which the pupils, students and staff were given the opportunity to celebrate and share their achievements with the local community.



Furthermore, a documentary film was produced and screened after the production. This was an important aspect of the project as it enabled the children to see themselves performing and ensured the audience was not limited to just those who attended the live performance.

The Evaluation

The objective of this evaluation is to investigate the extent to which involvement in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project positively impacted the participating children, teachers and university students, as well as the wider community. To investigate the potential benefits of such a large-scale artistic intervention, qualitative methods of data collected were adopted.

The researcher observed several workshops, rehearsals and performances and collected data from questionnaires completed by the participants.

The Project Aims:

- To establish a musical culture in the school through which future generations will benefit.
- To produce four public performance of the highest artistic standard.
- To enable active learning to take place through creativity.
- To enable the children to develop new creative and cross-curricular skills.
- To help the children gain in confidence and self-esteem, as well as socialise and communicate with others more effectively.
- To inspire and motivate teachers to use music as a powerful and effective educational tool.
- To increase the morale and profile of the school and the part it plays in the social and cultural life of its community.
- To provide music students with an invaluable opportunity to develop their amateur skills under the supervision of experienced arts practitioners.

Summary of the Key Findings:

- Involvement in the project was a hugely enjoyable experience for the participating children.
- The rich and immersive experience facilitated the development of both creative and cross-curricular skills in the children.
- The project had a positive impact on the children’s personal and social development. Involvement enhanced the confidence, self-esteem and sense of achievement in many of the children.
- The project offered the teachers at Leith Walk Primary the opportunity to continue their professional development by providing insight into the use of music and creativity as a powerful pedagogical tool.
- The project assisted in the delivery of the curriculum of excellence
- The project had a positive impact upon school morale and the school’s profile within the wider community.
- The project provided a platform upon which the parents and school could form a stronger partnership.
- The project offered the Music in the Community students the unique opportunity to develop and enhance their amateur skills.
- Involvement in the project enhanced the confidence of many music students and increased their interest in pursuing a career in music education.

Outcomes for the Children

■ a Positive and Enjoyable Experience

The data shows that involvement in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project was an extremely enjoyable and positive experience for the pupils of Leith Walk Primary School. 100% of the 42 pupils that completed the questionnaire stated that they enjoyed taking part in the project and 90% thought their experience of taking part was “amazing” or “really good”. This enthusiasm and positivity is supported by statements from the children which describe how they enjoyed the creative experience.

From the pupils:

‘It was fantastic taking part in the Mariner and I loved working with the students.’

‘It was amazing thank you so much Dee, Johnny and everyone else.’

‘It was really fun to take part in the show.’

‘It was the best thing I have ever done. Everybody was funny.’

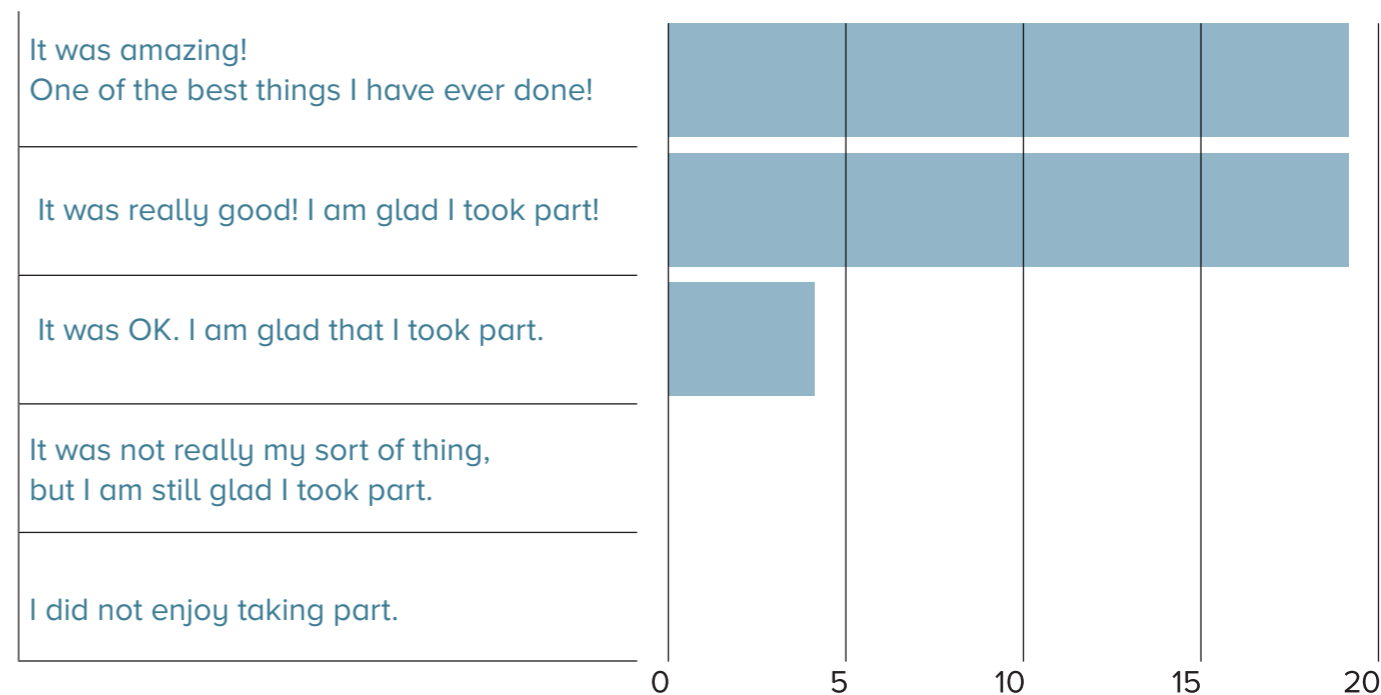
‘I loved the show so much. When the show finished I was crying so much. I had a great time with you.’

‘It was just amazing.’

‘There was nothing I didn’t enjoy.’

‘That experience was very beautiful, thanks!’

Which sentence best describes what it was like for you to take part in The Mariner?



Numerous comments from the school staff and music students further support the suggestion that the pupils thoroughly enjoyed participating in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project:

'From what I have seen they are very happy and proud of themselves. They are still wearing their hoodies with confidence.'
[Teacher]

'The best thing has been seeing the children grow through this experience as they commit and give 100%. They thoroughly enjoyed working with a variety of professionals particularly the music students and costume designer.' [Teacher]

'The best thing about the project was having the children commit to the project 100% and run up every night to perform.' [Teacher]

'I believe that my fellow students and I had a very positive impact on the children.'
[Music Student]

'They were all very enthusiastic at the rehearsals and enjoyed learning their parts in the classroom. The children who had solo lines were also very pleased and seemed to really enjoy what they had been given to do.'
[Music Student]

'From what the children were saying they enjoyed working with musicians and I could see some of them really looking up to some of the students involved as role models.'
[Music Student]

It seems that the multi-faceted nature of the project contributed to the children's positive experience and overall levels of enjoyment. The various aspects of the intervention allowed for accessibility, with a variety of elements appealing to different children. This provides a possible rationale behind the high levels of enjoyment experienced by the participating pupils.

When presented with a list of eight options, 100% of the children stated they had enjoyed at least one aspect of the project and many selected a number of options, as illustrated in the table below.

What did you like about taking part in the Mariner?	
I liked singing	27
I liked learning about music	20
I liked learning how to move and perform different roles	27
I liked working with the other children in the class	21
I liked working with the music students from Edinburgh University	28
I liked working with the visiting professional artists (Dee, Skye, Nomaan, Johnny, George, Gibi, Bouba)	36
I liked performing to an audience in Old College and the Playfair Library	29
I liked performing to my friends and family	31

The following statements from the children further demonstrate the overall breadth of the project and the specific elements that were enjoyed by each individual.

'It was fun. I loved my costume.'

'It felt amazing doing a public performance.'

'It was fun being a chef and water snake. I also cried when we were leaving.'

'I like performing because it was fun and I took part.'

'I loved being the sea serpents and the waiters. I loved both of them so much.'

'Everybody got to take part in the show and we got amazing costumes and I loved it. Thank you.'

'The best thing was working with professional actors.'

'The best thing was being able to have such an amazing experience/costume. Shout out to Anna AKA best costume designer ever.'

'The best things was having solo and speaking parts and doing it in 2 different places outside and inside.'

'I loved that we got to work with so many lovely people and play the role of a sea serpent and waitress. Also the costumes were amazing.'

'The best thing was working with a group of different people, using proper equipment, having roles and lines and performing for an audience.'

'I liked getting to perform with the students and having fun with my friends and performing in front of my family.'

'I loved singing and doing the movements but the best thing was having cool costumes and acting with great actors.'

'Taking part in the ancient mariner was a dream come true, so much support and help. It was really fun working with other professionals also I loved learning about instruments and music. As well as enjoying using proper equipment. This show was amazing and I hope to do one again soon.'

Both the statistical data and the comments from the pupils suggest that the children enjoyed a variety of aspects incorporated within the artistic intervention. This immersive experience allowed the children to work with professional artists, including a costume designer, which seemed to make a lasting impression on many of the children. In addition to this, the act of rehearsing and performing seemed to enthuse and instil a sense of achievement and pride in many of the children. The professional scale of the production put an emphasis on broadening expectations and pushing the pupils out of their comfort zone. Firstly, the Playfair Library and the Old College Quad were beautiful settings for the performance, places where 69% of the children had not visited previously. It seems that such a magical and exciting venue inspired many of the pupils who were able to experience something out of the ordinary. With the help of professional lighting, sound effects, props and set, the children were transported to another world, one full of excitement and creativity.

Secondly, the sense of community amongst the artists, students and pupils that grew out of the intervention, created momentum and excitement for the performance and contributed to the children's overall enjoyment. The group's identity, fostered through a shared musical journey, helped to create an environment where the children's creativity was encouraged and celebrated. Furthermore, the pupils were treated and respected as equals within the professional company, a motivating and encouraging factor for many of the children. This aspect was further emphasised through the documentary film, in which the children were able to watch themselves as part of the large-scale production and see their names acknowledged alongside the students and artistic professionals. It has been implied through the data, that these factors were instrumental in motivating the children and making the experience a memorable and enjoyable one.

■ Acquisition of New Knowledge and Skills

It was an important aim of the project to enable creativity in children with little access to the arts, to develop musical and cross curricular skills. Through the artistic intervention, the children were exposed to an environment that encouraged and fostered creative and academic development. 100% of the teachers “strongly agree” or “agree” that through involvement in the project, the children in their classes have developed new skills in these areas. It is clearly implied that the project enriched the children’s educational experience and helped in the acquisition and development of a range of skills.

73% of the pupils stated that they learned something new whilst taking part in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project. These skills can be categorised as either ‘creative skills’ and ‘other skills and areas of knowledge’. It is suggested that the intervention nurtured creative and musical growth, which in turn helped in extra- musical development.

■ Development of Creative skills

To ensure the quality and success of the production, as well as a sense of achievement and motivation in the children, it was essential that the development of creative skills was a main focus. Developing creative skills in a multi-art context offers a fun, constructive way to learn. As part of the project, the pupils were taught new songs and choreography to perform in the production. The multidisciplinary nature of the project enabled the children to develop a wide range of creative skills, including singing, movement, listening and acting.

Musically, the workshops were centred around the repertoire of new songs which broadened the children’s understanding of tempo, pitch, rhythm, timbre and dynamics.

In addition to this, the children’s listening skills and singing technique seemed to improve whilst working with the students and artistic professionals. The children’s performance skills, such as following a conductor, maintaining focus and a confident posture were nurtured during the creative process and clearly developed from the project’s inception to the performances to March.

These imaginative workshops helped the children to act, move and behave comfortably within their roles. This aspect of the children’s development was further supported during rehearsals with the professional artists, director, musicians and actors, who were a source of inspiration for the children.

The following statements from participating pupils illustrate their experience and the creative skills they acquired and developed during the project.

‘I learnt that the choreography is super mega important.’

‘I learnt how to sing.’

‘I learnt that Skye the choreographer does the movement things.’

‘I learnt how to be a professional and how it will be in a real play.’

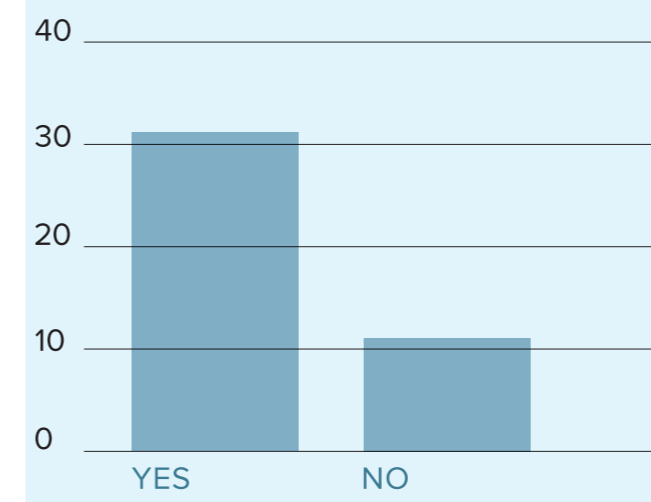
‘I learnt that Gibi and Bouba are really talented.’

‘I learnt how to perform clean and good.’

‘I learned everything about music and acting.’

‘It takes a lot of effort and time, rhythm and pulse, and patience.’

Did you learn something new whilst taking part in *the mariner*?



Additionally, during creative sessions with Skye Reynolds, the children learnt about movement and the importance of choreography within a performance.

‘I learnt how to sing properly and make sure you have the pulse.’

‘I learnt how to sing high notes and really low notes.’

‘Now I have good listening ears.’

It can be suggested that the scale of the production motivated the children and subsequently contributed to the acquisition of new creative skills. The new music and the rehearsal process instilled a sense of ownership and responsibility in the children which arguably resulted in improved behaviour and engagement.

■ Other Skills and Areas of Knowledge

In addition to supporting the delivery of the Expressive Arts component of the Curriculum of Excellence, the multifaceted arts intervention created an environment that nurtured and developed cross-curricular

skills. As part of the project, the children were required to memorise lyrics, a skill especially useful to those learning English as a second language. The project encouraged participation from the school’s diverse community and provided an opportunity for those who have yet to achieve fluency in English to take part. In addition to this, the story of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and Gerda Stevenson’s creative libretto encouraged an interest in creative writing amongst many of the children. The themes of refuge and death within the story brought about an awareness of the current refugee crisis and the importance of tolerance and celebrating difference.

*‘I learnt that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was a poem.’*

‘I never knew that the ancient mariner was a thing or a poem but now I know. That was amazing and I want to perform again.’

‘I learnt that the story is a real, tragic story.’

■ Personal and Social Development

A key principle of Music in the Community is to promote the personal and social benefits of engaging with music. In keeping with this ethos, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project aimed to achieve non-musical goals and support the children’s emotional well-being. In addition to supporting the broad aims of the curriculum, the project helped develop positive habits of mind in the children which transfer to other areas of their lives. It can be suggested that the large-scale production allowed the children to flourish in a new and exciting environment, which engendered a sense of pride and achievement in the participating pupils and developed areas such as self-confidence, self-esteem, social interaction and communication skills.

■ Confidence

100% of the teachers who participated in the project “strongly agree” that involvement in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project has had a positive impact upon the confidence and self-esteem of the children in their class. This is supported by a number of comments from the teachers, music students and pupils.

‘It was amazing to see the confidence of the children.’ [Teacher]

‘Confidence has increased especially when participating in different activities in class. Resilience has improved and the children will give things a go without any prejudgement.’ [Teacher]

‘The children grew in confidence, they were very enthusiastic and really enjoyed working on the show.’ [Music Student]

‘I learned to build up my confidence and not to be too shy around the audience.’ [Pupil]

‘I learnt that having fun is all that matters because if you’re having fun, you CAN do it.’ [Pupil]

‘Take pride in what you do. and be you. and not to be scared.’ [Pupil]

‘I learnt how to be more confident.’ [Pupil]

‘I learnt to be more confident around people I don’t know.’ [Pupil]

An overall increase in confidence witnessed in the children can be attributed to the accessibility of the artistic intervention. The inclusive nature of the project allowed every child to play an important role in the production and make a valid and celebrated contribution.

Regardless of ability, the children were united, along with the professional cast,

to achieve artistic success. The collective achievement that grew out of this collaboration was recognised and validated through public performances to friends and families, as well as people from the local community. Enthusiastic applause from the audience seemed to cement the children’s increase in confidence and bolstered self-esteem. The following comments from the participating pupils illustrate how the act of performing in front of their parents and friends instilled a sense of pride and achievement in the children.

‘Its not all about being the best its about taking part and being proud of yourself.’ [Pupil]

‘The best thing was ... getting the “wows” and the “I’m so proud of you”, and most of all, my brother said it was going to be boring but now he says it was very good!’ [Pupil]

‘I got to actually act for people all around Edinburgh.’ [Pupil]

‘I loved that we performed in front of so many people! I knew that they loved it!’ [Pupil]

‘I liked being a waiter because I gave drinks to my mum and the guests.’ [Pupil]

‘I liked the part holding the bride’s costume because everyone looks at you and gives you a joyful smile and makes you less nervous.’ [Pupil]

‘I felt good when I was on stage.’ [Pupil]

‘I learnt that acting in front of so many people is kinda fun.’ [Pupil]

‘It wasn’t competitive, it was just about having fun and performing.’ [Pupil]

‘I loved learning all the songs and performing them in front of an audience and doing it outside.’ [Pupil]

‘I liked performing in front of an audience. I got to perform to my Mum and Auntie.’ [Pupil]

‘I learned when you’re performing you have to do your best and never give up.’ [Pupil]

The evidence further suggests that participating in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project had a significant impact on the children’s aspirations. 67% of the pupils indicated that they would like to take part in another Music in the community production. It seems the project engendered an awareness and enthusiasm for music and the arts, and encouraged the children to consider their potential.

‘When I was performing the Mariner, I felt like a real actress and I want to be an actress when I grow up, it’s on my list of 14 jobs.’ [Pupil]

‘Well I hope we can take part in another show like this.’ [Pupil]

‘I’d like to say that there would be no better show experience again! I really hope we do this again!’ [Pupil]

‘It was the first time I was doing a show not in school so I really liked taking part in it.’ [Pupil]

■ Social and Team Building Skills

The success of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project was reliant on team work and the effective collaboration between the pupils, students and artistic professionals. As a result, the children were required to work together within a challenging and unfamiliar setting, which had a subsequent impact on their social and team building skills. The evidence suggests that the children enjoyed working and socialising with their peers in this way, and that the project had a significant effect on relationships within the classroom.

‘I made friends forever and had fun with the students. My sister did a show with Dee and she loved it and I love it to.’ [Pupil]

‘I loved having time with my friends while doing rehearsals and with the music students and learning how an actor feels.’ [Pupil]

‘The best thing was being with all my friends.’ [Pupil]

‘The best thing was that I got the part of the sea snakes, with my friends and the class.’ [Pupil]

■ Why was the project so successful in the delivery of these outcomes for the children?

The success of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project has been demonstrated through the evaluation of outcomes for the participating children. The positive impact of the project can be attributed to many aspects, including the expertise and leadership of the creative artists and the partnerships created through the intervention.

■ The Expertise and Leadership of the Creative Artists

The professional artists, creative practitioners and production team created a foundation upon which the project could develop and succeed. Through planning, organising and facilitating musical workshops, rehearsals and performances, the team of creative artists was vital in the delivery of an inspiring and meaningful experience for the children. The expertise and wealth of experience that the professional team brought to the production not only enhanced the quality of the creative outcome, but ensured the process ran smoothly. The music and libretto

was written to cater for the age group and abilities of the children, who were supported and accompanied by the experienced musicians. The music engaged the children in the storyline and enabled every child to sing and participate.

The creative process was strengthened further through the involvement of Music in the Community students, who were able to transfer their musical skills to pupils with less experience. As explored previously, the children highly enjoyed working with the students and professional artists who became a source of inspiration and motivation. The pupils at Leith Walk thrived when immersed in the creative process of making music and discovering how the elements of music, dance, visual art and design combine to create a performance. Ultimately, this was facilitated by the creative professionals who led by example.

In order to involve a professional team of artists and ensure the success of an intervention, adequate funding is required. To secure the future of Music in the Community projects and continue to give children the opportunity to develop important educational, personal and social skills, further monetary support is necessary and needed.

■ Partnerships

Over the past 13 years, Music in the Community has devised and managed nine music theatre projects involving large numbers of primary school children from areas of significant deprivation within the City of Edinburgh. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project represented the finale of a three year engagement with Leith Walk Primary School. This unique collaboration has been celebrated through multiple

projects, conceived by Dee Isaacs, who aims to bring communities together through music. The work, embedded within the school community, has formed partnerships between the school, the parents, the children, the students and creative professionals, all of which contribute to the successful delivery of outcomes for the children.

It seems this project has helped engender integration and a sense of belonging in the school and amongst the parents, teachers and university students. The school staff worked to ensure the parents were committed and onboard with the project, which in turn enhanced their sense of connection with the school. The trust that developed through this partnership enabled the children to participate in an activity far from the ordinary and reap the benefits of such an intervention. Seeing their children in a new and creative environment heightened the expectations of many parents and enhanced the overall sense of the community.

A general enthusiasm and eagerness to participate from the school teachers and university students contributed further to the sense of togetherness that grew out of the project, and was key in ensuring its success. The commitment demonstrated by all the participants, including the children, was remarkable and demonstrated the strength of the partnership that has emerged over the last 3 years.

'I was very impressed not only with the quality of the production but also the care and commitment to the children's learning and welfare that was shown by your team. Given the weather conditions and length of production, it seemed that all the challenges were well planned for and well dealt with and the value of teamwork was clearly demonstrated.' [Parent]

Outcomes for the Teachers

One of the key aims of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project was to engage with the staff at Leith Walk Primary school and equip them with the musical skills and confidence to bring creativity into the classroom. It was important that the teachers had a positive experience of Music in the Community, to nurture the link that had formed throughout the partnership and ensure the legacy continues.

The evidence suggests that this goal was achieved, as 100% of the teachers "strongly agree" that involvement in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project was "an extremely positive experience".

'It reminded me why I came into teaching – to help children by meeting their needs and supporting them to make a difference in their lives.' [Teacher]

■ Continuing Professional Development

Comments and data collated from the questionnaires show that involvement in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project has been beneficial to the teacher's professional development. 100% of the participating teachers "agree" that working with professional artists and music students made them more confident about using music as a teaching and learning tool, one individual stating:

'I would say my confidence as a teacher has grown, especially when teaching drama and having the children express themselves in different ways.' [Teacher]

It appears that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project challenged the teachers to use and experience music as an educational tool. In keeping with the aims and principles of Music in the Community, the teachers' confidence and skills were enhanced through music, alongside the development of the children. Through working alongside professional artists and music students, the teachers were exposed to the benefits of an immersive, creative environment when facilitating learning and growth. Through this, it seems the teachers were able to develop their own teaching techniques.

■ Delivery of the Curriculum for Excellence

The national Curriculum of Excellence identifies the purpose of education as the enablement of young people to become "successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors". With regards to how *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project integrated within the delivery of the Curriculum of Excellence, 100% of the participating teachers "strongly agree" or "agree" that the musical experience contributed positively to the development of the four capacities that comprise the Curriculum of Excellence. As a result, the profile of expressive arts within the classroom was greatly enhanced throughout the school. As the three year partnership between the University of Edinburgh and Leith Walk Primary School comes to a close, it is important to recognise how the use of music and creativity will be continued within the classroom, demonstrating the powerful impact Music in the Community has had on the educational landscape of the school.

'Health and wellbeing as well as creativity are at the heart of the Curriculum of Excellence and The Rime of the Ancient Mariner project developed these areas

fully. It is truly an interdisciplinary project as it incorporates so many aspects of the curriculum and yet enables the children and staff to experience so much more. The joy of the final night was very special and it is incredible for our school to be able to invite parents and carers to attend a performance of such high calibre where they see their children in wonderful and possibly new ways. The impact of this is incalculable.’ [Teacher]

‘A project such as *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* can help contribute to a number of areas of the Curriculum of Excellence. Expressive arts is the most obvious aspect within singing and drama as well as art though costume design. Health and Wellbeing is another aspect that easily fits into the project that was used this year to build confidence, share feelings and generate discussion during circle times.’ [Teacher]

■ Witnessing the Children in a New Light

Due to the nature of the musical workshops, the teachers adopted a supportive role within the classroom, in contrast to that of an instructor or leader. As a result, the teachers were able to observe and interact with the pupils in a different capacity. It can be suggested that this new perspective gave the teachers a unique insight into the children’s personalities and abilities, which in turn positively affected the teacher-pupil relationship.

‘The teachers could gain an insight into the importance of the arts in schools. Teachers’ relationships with the children became more friendly and the children had lots of respect for them.’ [Music Student]

‘It was amazing to see the confidence of the children and having them with professionals in a professional show is such an incredible experience.’ [Teacher]

‘The best thing has been seeing the children grow through this experience as they commit and give 100%. They thoroughly enjoyed working with a variety of professionals particularly the music students and the costume designer.’ [Teacher]

‘I loved the enthusiasm and creativity of all involved.’ [Teacher]

Outcomes for the Wider School Community

A key aim of the project was to increase the profile of Leith Walk Primary School within the wider community and improve morale amongst the pupils, staff and parents. In addition to the impact on the participants, it is important to recognise how the wider school and local community has shared and reaped the benefits of the artistic intervention.

100% of the participating teachers “strongly agree” that involvement in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project had a positive impact upon the school morale and the school’s profile within the wider community. Furthermore, it seems parents were given the opportunity to form stronger bonds with the school through mutually supporting the children in their creative endeavours.

‘The parents have been amazed at what the children can do. I was stopped the morning after the performance by two parents in the street raving about it. I have had phone calls requesting the DVD to send to family members overseas. Lots of people, grannies, grandpas, uncles who are not really connected with the school phoning me or contacting me or giving me messages.’ [Head Teacher]

The performance enabled parents to witness their children achieving and celebrating diversity. The large-scale, professional production offered an experience that was beyond the expectations of many families, encouraging a supportive environment for future ambitions.

‘Just a short note to thank you so much for the Music in The Community project ‘*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*’ with Leith Walk Primary School this year. As you know

my daughter was involved as one of the participants and the confidence, enjoyment and stagecraft that she gained from taking part in the project was extremely valuable.’ [Parent]

As witnessed through the regular attendance and support of parents during the three year partnership, as well as a strong network of engagement through social media, it can be suggested that the Music in the Community project challenges perceptions and invites parents to celebrate their children in new ways.

In addition to the feedback from the children’s families, teachers also commented on how the project impacted the wider school community.

‘Community Music is just so important when education is being cut ... when this is happening music in the community is vital and I am terrified that it is just going to fade away ... Every school across the globe would benefit from this.’ [Head Teacher]

This statement illustrates the value of Music in the Community, not only on the individual students, but on the wider education system. It is suggested that schools across the world would equally benefit from arts intervention of the same calibre.

‘It is a privilege for our school to be involved in this project. The commitment is considerable but we are all delighted to be part of this process. The wider community fully supports their children and the school in this venture.’ [Teacher]

It is clear to see that this project has had a positive effect on the wider community of Leith Walk Primary School. In addition to the pupils, staff and students directly involved in the production, the creativity has had a secondary impact on the audiences, families and wider school community.

Outcomes for the Students

One of the key aspects of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project was to provide the undergraduate Music in the Community Students at the University of Edinburgh with the opportunity to gain access to experiences and skills that will contribute to their own personal and professional development. The students played an integral part in the project, from its inception to the final performances. It was the responsibility of 21 students to plan and deliver music workshops to the pupils on a weekly basis, gaining valuable experience in leading and interacting with large groups of primary school children within a creative environment. The students shaped the musical output of the project and gained insight into how a large-scale educational project functions and evolves, from the planning and preparation stages to the performance, in which they got the unique opportunity to work alongside a professional production team.

The evidence collected from the feedback questionnaires, which were distributed to the students at the end of the project, suggest that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project offered a unique and positive experience to the participants and developed a wide range of skills. 100% of the students “strongly agree” or “agree” that participation in the project was “an extremely positive experience” and many implied that their involvement had empowered and inspired them to continue to work in community music practice.

‘This reminded me of one of the reasons I would like to go into teaching following my degree ... It was rewarding to realise that you played a role in the success of the show.’ [Music Student]

I loved getting involved with the kids and seeing their involvement increase in music. We built a really strong bond with the children and it was great to see the progress from the group effort. [Music Student]

I absolutely loved being involved in this, a definite highlight of my uni experience, even with all the time and challenges it came with. [Music Student]

Having an opportunity to participate in such a project alongside my degree studies has been great and I feel that working with young children in order to put together a performance of such a standard has been beneficial to all involved. [Music Student]

■ Development of Animateur Skills

100% of the participating students “strongly agree” that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project provided them with an invaluable opportunity to develop their professional skills in working with young people. During the project, the students were given the opportunity to manage and teach large groups of pupils and actively engage with community music practice. As a result, it seems their organisational skills, leadership and confidence in workshop leading were supported and developed. In addition to these valuable skills, the musical resources utilised within the classroom and during the performances widened to the student’s repertoire of musical activities, with which they can deliver effective and educational workshops.

‘I feel that I have grown in confidence in my ability to lead workshops with children, and I know that I have developed my skills as a musician, specifically in leading/conducting. The project has also given me confidence in

my ability to work with other professionals, namely teachers – a unique opportunity for students not on a vocational course, and goes a long way towards equipping students for work.’ [Music Student]

‘I greatly enjoyed being part of the Ancient Mariner Project as it was interesting to experience what goes into making a large scale production like this. It was also a great opportunity to work with professional actors and a director, making friends for life and learning invaluable skills to apply in the future.’ [Music Student]

‘Realising the importance of preparation, planning and communication. These are the three key words for something of this scale. I have realised that following these words is part of the production, and if I was organising something like this in the future I would understand the benefit of being on the receiving end of a well-structured and informed group of people.’ [Music Student]

‘My workshop delivery confidence and singing confidence improved greatly. I learned so much about taking classes.’ [Music Student]

‘I think that this course is just so good at giving fundamental experience and knowledge in working with people in music – and this course puts you in such good stance for developing life skills – not just in music.’ [Music Student]

‘For me, this course has been the most interesting and intellectually stimulating out of my degree. I have gained many skills that I can use in many circumstances, especially in my future career.’ [Music Student]

‘I feel that Music in the Community is the single most useful course I have taken in terms of improving my skills as a musician, and also my skills in other areas – confidence, presentation skills, working

as part of a group. I feel that it gives ‘real world skills, and I have felt very valued as a student on the course – the passion and time given by staff is just incredible. Being able to be involved in high level (large budget!) creative projects in the community (outside of university) is a fabulous opportunity for all involved.’ [Music Student]

‘The Music in the Community programme has become the single most challenging and transformational activity for the majority of students taking a Music degree. It engenders a sense of worth and commitment, and a focus on skill and communication which is only possible in a situation where the social benefit of the work is so apparent to everyone involved. Dee has developed an extraordinary project, and the students are enthusiastic to be involved. I think it has enormous benefits for all concerned, and I give it my wholehearted support.’ [Prof. Peter Nelson, ex. Head of Music, University of Edinburgh]

It can be concluded from the data that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project contributed considerably to the students’ professional development. The multidisciplinary nature of the project enabled the participants to experience various disciplines and work as part of a large-scale professional production. During this process, the student’s amateur skills were supported and developed, through interactions with both the pupils and other creative professionals.

■ Challenges

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner project presented several challenges to the students involved, many of which relating to the delivery of creative and engaging workshops to large groups of primary school children. The students were given a relatively limited time-frame in which to

complete their work and were expected to manage their commitments professionally. In addition to this, disruptive pupils often posed a further challenge to the students, who were encouraged to use innovative and creative ways of engaging with all the children. Long rehearsals and outdoor performances often resulted in tiredness in some children, a problem exacerbated by the extremely cold weather. This required a greater effort from the students to remain positive and enthusiastic, to ensure the performers were motivated and engaged. The evidence suggests that these challenges were met with perseverance and resourcefulness, and it can be suggested that the students gained valuable insight into the difficulties and obstacles that can occur within this field of work.

‘The first challenging part was the dedication of time to the project. It was very time consuming to go to the school every week for 2 hours as well as the rehearsals in the location of the show. This challenge was met with appropriate time management besides other courses I am currently taking.’
[Music Student]

‘Some children were reluctant to take part as much as others, so finding ways to engage them was challenging. For this we would try to make the environment less intimidating and use ice-breakers and games to involve everyone.’ [Music Student]

In addition to the difficulties of behavioural and time management, it seems the students were challenged by the requirements of a large-scale production. Again, it can be suggested that the project gave the students the opportunity to navigate a professional setting, in which they were expected to remain dedicated, flexible and communicative.

‘The second challenge was adapting to varying requirements. My role in the show changed several times, so it was difficult to

keep up with what I was being asked to do, then adapt to the new role I was presented with in the show. This challenge was met by being easy going and keeping a cool head, which was sometimes difficult!’
[Music Student]

‘For a lot of the time it was difficult to imagine everything coming together successfully as there were many different elements being practiced and at times this got confusing.’
[Music Student]

‘There were some occasional issues with communication and artistic differences which meant the children were sometimes unsure of what was expected of them. These challenges were met by going over things a few times and ensuring everyone knew what was going on.’ [Music Student]

■ Career Insight

According to the feedback questionnaires, 100% of the participating students “strongly agree” or “agree” that as a result of taking part in the project they are more interested in pursuing a career in music education. Being involved in such a large-scale creative intervention gave the students valuable insight into how projects are planned, set up and run. It was a unique opportunity to experience first hand the type of production that is possible to achieve and the scope of careers that can stem from working in community music.

To conclude, it seems *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project was of significant benefit to the participating students. It is evidenced that the project had a positive impact on the students developing amateur skills and exposed them to a context in which they were able to utilise those resources. Although it seems the experience posed several challenges, the rewarding nature

of the project enhanced the confidence of many of the students and gave them insight into the value and importance of community music practice.

Conclusion

This report has evaluated the extent to which *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project impacted those who participated. It can be suggested from the overwhelmingly positive evidence, that the creative intervention had an enormously positive effect on the children, teachers and music students involved, as well as the wider school community.

Most importantly, the intervention had a significant and positive effect on the participating children through contributing to the development of creative and cross-curricular skills. In addition to this, an increase in their confidence, self-esteem and communication skills was witnessed during involvement in the intervention. It is hoped that these skills will continue to develop and contribute to the children’s personal growth. The project championed music as a powerful and effective learning tool and informed teachers of creative pedagogies, with the

intention of future generations reaping the benefits of music within the classroom.

The success of the project demonstrated the incredible potential of large-scale creative interventions and immersive experiences for children. With the help of professional artists, the calibre of excellence broadened the expectations and ambitions of the pupils, teachers and parents, and provided an experience that was inspiring and celebrated within the local community. Working in this intensive way, within a creatively enriching environment, has proven to bring about impressive results, with reference to both artistic quality and the personal growth of those involved, as illustrated throughout this evaluation.

Overall, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* project has demonstrated the profoundly important impact an arts interventions can have upon its participants. The central ethos of Music in the Community, to offer a fun and constructive way to learn and develop creative, social and personal skills, has been championed and celebrated through the University of Edinburgh’s collaboration with Leith Walk Primary School. As the partnership comes to an end, it is hoped that engagement in music will continue to develop, and help children thrive and grow within the school community.



It reminded me why I came into teaching –
to help children by supporting them to
make a difference in their lives.’

—Teacher

The best thing was ... getting the “wows”
and the “I’m so proud of you!”

—Pupil

‘Let us tell a different story. Let us remember
that the movement of human beings on earth
is not new. Human history is a history of
movement and mingling. Let us remember
that we are not just bones and flesh. We are
emotional beings. We all share a desire to be
valued, a desire to matter. Let us remember
that dignity is as important as food.’ —UNHCR