



Unseen Voices project **Brent Council evaluation**

Unseen Voices is a creative participatory project created and delivered by creative director Sergio Lopez Figueroa with pupils from Preston Manor School. Two weeks of intensive workshops allowed students to research film and images archives, creating from it a silent film, accompanied by specially composed music which was then showcased at Brent Holocaust Memorial day 2008. The process of all aspects of this project is currently been made into a DVD and used as an educational tool which will be circulated to all of Brent's schools.

The Film and Music project was a fantastic experience for everyone involved; it presented new, challenging and creative ways of learning for the young people and certainly left them with an enhanced knowledge of individual experiences in World War 2 conflict and the skills to reflect on the past, present and future. We were very ambitious delivering the Film and Music element of the outreach project within the 3 weeks that led up to Brent Holocaust Memorial Day and had to be diligent when delivering the project.

The aim was to originally work with a group of pupils from Jewish Free School in Brent; however due to the school's capacity they were unable to commit to the short time frame that we had to deliver the project so we worked with 14 Year 10, musically accomplished pupils from Preston Manor School in Brent. The four stages of the project enabled the young people to work collaboratively and learn from a range of experiences and work with different partners. The project was especially successful in teaching the children how important it is to remember the past, combining historical facts with real people telling their own story and relating event's between the past and the present. This was achieved by facilitating a visit to The Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum and using resources from Brent's Libraries, Archives and Museum and The Anne Frank Trust.

Talks at the beginning of the project lead by Brent Archives and Anne Frank Trust were beneficial to the project. The outcome of this was that the students found the Anne Frank Trust talk really inspiring and interesting.

The young speaker sparked debates and critical thinking regarding 2nd world war and contemporary conflicts world wide and also local gang crime in London this developed positive attitudes between the group and an understanding of human rights and active citizenship and the impact that each individual adopting this awareness can have an impact contemporary society and it's present conflicts.

Strong links were forged between the City Learning Centre. Being able to use their facilities for the editing workshops was pivotal to the success of the project. The creative director introduced the pupils to a new experience of how to edit material to create a film drawn from a number of resources, the feedback we had from the pupils was that they felt inspired by the process as it allowed them to reflect on what the viewer would be watching, but would have liked the workshops to last longer so they could have stretched their potential.

The children benefited from the creative director's exceptional musical and compositional abilities. He introduced creative methods of playing instruments they had not heard of before. For example, prepared piano and playing balloons. The creative director's ideas pushed the boundaries of conventional music making. The students from Preston Manor were intelligent creative individuals who were able to convey their views clearly.

Eric Angus from Brent music service was extremely supportive in his advice and produced a beautiful choir who were able to pick up the essence of the performance. Although we had originally hoped to involve a larger number of young people from the choir, we did successfully engage with 15 of the choir who were professional in their approach and attitude to the pre performance workshop led by the creative director and they performed brilliantly on the day.

300 people from Brent's diverse community turned up to Brent Town Hall hear personal stories about Genocides and the Holocaust at Brent Holocaust Memorial Day on 27th January, attendees were gripped by the live stunning showcase of the outreach project 'Unseen Voices'. This allowed the children to present the outcome of their hard work and was a valuable stepping stone, providing them with a great sense of achievement which they all enjoyed.

The project was filmed throughout all the stages of a project including the final performance at Brent Town hall, this material and other material sourced from The Anne Frank Trust and The Winer Library will contribute to the educational DVD which addresses the Holocaust Trust theme imagine, remember, reflect, react. The DVD will be circulated to 100 of Brent's schools and is to be stored at Brent Archive to make it accessible to all other members of the community, therefore creating a learning resource for years to come.

Unseen Voices is a fantastic example of the importance of collaboration and participation between public bodies as well as individuals and organizations and the impact they can have when persuaded think outside the box.

More information and a dossier available here www.unseenvoices.org

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