

City Bridge Trust – Monitoring Visit Report

Organisation: Spare Tyre Theatre Company	Grant ref: 9886 (assessing officer Stewart Goshawk)	Programme area: 01. Accessible London\c) Accessible Arts & Sports
Amount, date and purpose of grant: 03/06/2010: £120,000 over three years (3 x £40,000) towards a theatre arts programme for people with learning difficulties.		
Visiting Grants Officer: Ciaran Rafferty – accompanied by Deputy Ken Ayres, Chief Commoner	Date of meeting: 14 th November 2012	
Met with: Arti Prashar (Artistic Director/CEO) and Richard Oyarzabal (Executive Director)		
1. Introduction to the organisation: <p>Spare Tyre theatre was established over 30 years ago and was originally known as the Feminist Theatre Co and concentrated on productions. It later became a community orientated organisation, working with a wide range of communities. Its current work is mostly with adults, including older people, and people with learning difficulties though there is some youth theatre work. The Artistic Director has been with the Theatre for 11 years.</p>		
2. The project funded: <p>The grant commenced in June 2010 and is used to support core posts in the delivery of a range of work with and for people with learning difficulties – including to help them devise their own pieces of theatre. The three objectives of the project were to: improve access to quality arts activities; to raise the profile of the artistic achievements and social benefits of participatory arts; and to develop a programme of new interactive theatre.</p>		
3. Work delivered to date: <p>A lot of the work delivered is bespoke and deals with the issues raised/encountered both by individuals and by groups – they have a steady stream of requests and have very good links with a wide range of organisations who will refer potential participants as will care agencies and individual carers. Part of the project involves a Company of Artists. The emphasis of Spare Tyre’s approach is to focus on the needs and aspirations of the individual and to strive to provide them with a platform for their work. they offer a very disciplined environment (eg in terms of time-keeping, attendance, etc) and people must commit to a 10-wk term.</p> <p>In a typical year the organisation will deliver up to 60 workshops catering for over 70 people with learning difficulties plus a range of half- and full-day outreach workshops throughout several boroughs across London. The workshops incorporate music and drama. The organisation also took part on the CBT stage in the Cheapside Fayre in June 2012 and delivered a large number of theatre performances including in schools.</p>		

4. Difference made:

One of the aims of the project is to help participants maintain their skill/competency level and to do this there needs to be regular contact. An example of how/when this works is with the Street Band which started out meeting monthly and is now weekly. The grant has helped the outreach programme become more established and it is this programme which enables people from across London to access the Theatre (there are now regular workshops in Wandsworth, Hounslow and Redbridge).

The Company of Artists has been very good at bringing different groups together. Participants have learned practical skills (eg on performance, set design, costume making) as well as "soft" skills eg better self-confidence, self-esteem, participation skills.

The organisation keeps very good feedback-type records from participants and is able to quote comments which support the personal satisfaction of service users with the programmes and activities. Those working with or for participants in other contexts (eg teachers or care workers) have also provided evidence of how they feel the individuals have developed as a result of Spare Tyre's work.

Because the project works with people from a wide range of communities it sets out to harness particular cultural aspects from those taking part and incorporating these into the overall programme. Future work will aim to target more of the outer London boroughs (if possible).

5. Grants Administration:

The grant, from the perspective of the organisation, has been administered very effectively (eg for grant payments and general reporting systems). From the Trust's perspective the organisation has complied with everything asked of it and has provided good monitoring reports so far.

6. Concluding comments:

The Trust is very much aware of the value of the Arts both in engaging with disadvantaged communities and in helping to address the disadvantage. Spare Tyre theatre has a long history of doing exactly that and is quite expert at it. It places the needs, capabilities and aspirations of the individual at the centre of its programmes and projects and can help them to move from A to B, whether that be to gain personal skills, improve competencies, reduce isolation, or a combination of all of these. The organisation has stability and appears well managed and knows the wider arts world and the issues currently affecting it.