

Participatory Arts Project Brief Evaluation

DANCE



These questions come courtesy of Culture Health & Wellbeing Alliance's report "How creativity and culture is supporting shielding and vulnerable people at home during Covid-19."

bravebolddrama.co.uk

<https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/how-creativity-and-culture-are-supporting-shielding-and-vulnerable-people-home-during-covid-19>

Summary of Project

We worked with 14-15 year old girls from Merchants' Academy in Withywood in 2019 to devise a dance-drama piece about their perspective of gender equality. Also on the creative team were choreographer Vic Hole and film-maker Anna Haydock Wilson. The girls presented their work in Withywood for friends and family and also at City Hall as part of Bristol's International Women's Day in March 2019.

Brave Bold Drama was commissioned to create and deliver this project by Anna Haydock Wilson. It was part of her larger project called Art Within The Cracks which gave space to Bristol-based women creatives working in a wide range of creative disciplines and culminated in several sharings, performances and workshops at International Women's Day 2019.

www.artwithinthecracks.org



Funder/s: Arts Council England

Who was it for? Female-identifying students aged 14-15 who attend Merchants' Academy.

What outcomes were we aiming for? To empower the participants to be more confident about moving in front of each other in PE class. To devise a new piece of dance-drama that expressed their ideas about gender equality.

Where did it happen? Mostly at Merchants' Academy. There was also a sharing of the final piece at a community arts centre on the same street as Merchants' Academy (Creative Workspace) and at City Hall in Bristol.

Were you working in partnership? We needed the full support of Merchants' Academy, in particular the PE teacher who gave up her lessons so we could rehearse with the group, plus we worked with film-maker (and commissioner) Anna Haydock-Wilson and choreographer Vic Hole.

How many people took part? 17 students shaped and rehearsed the piece, and all 17 performed at Creative Workspace. 6 students returned on the Saturday to travel to City Hall and present there.

For how long did it happen? It ran from January - March 2019. It took from September to December 2018 to get the arrangements in place so we could start in January 2019.

What were the main outcomes? In addition to the performances, the students grew in confidence. At the start they were reluctant to move. By the end they were freely sharing small group work with each other, giving praise and feedback without any prompting from the artists or the teacher. Vic Hole sustained the project by running an extra-curricular dance group until March 2020 funded partly by the school and partly by Magic Little Grants secured by Brave Bold Drama.

Feedback: *"Coming up with our own dance moves and putting it all together, it's been fun. I had massive stage fright, the thought of being in front of a load of people, but this helped, I'm doing it on my own terms. It was something different. We could be ourselves."* (The students)

"Thank you for all you have achieved with this group. It has been an incredible journey!"
(PE Teacher, Merchants' Academy)

What were the challenges and successes? Getting the project set up at the start took a lot of energy. Teachers don't have much time to respond to emails and powerful firewalls often mean external emails never reach the right teacher. We tried visiting the school, leaving phone and written messages, but nothing worked. In the end Vic Hole who was also employed part time at Tobacco Factory Theatres (TFTs) used her TFT email to contact the school which finally got the ball rolling, perhaps because TFT are better known than Brave Bold Drama. The legacy, the extra-curricular dance group, was going strong and we were about to stage another showcase of work at Creative Workspace and had paid dance specialists to attend this showcase to mentor, support and encourage the students. This never happened because of lockdown.

Links to further information: <https://bravebolddrama.co.uk/community/youngpeople.html>
<https://artwithinthecracks.org/2019/03/25/dance-drama-with-merchants-academy/>