

## Drama Express 2023 Annual Report

As Trustees of Drama Express we are privileged to share with you the annual report of the charity's activities throughout 2023. The continued progress and development of the charity is testimony to the dedication of Drama Express specialists and volunteers. We are indebted to our funders, donators and supporters whom without their kindness Drama Express would not be able to continue to do its life affirming work.

Below we have summarized month by month activities delivered by Drama Express.

**January:** The Drama Express pantomime was delivered at locations which included Penzance, Truro, Newquay, Bodmin and Falmouth. The pantomime was an 'original piece of work' written and produced by the Drama Express team. The title 'Morwenna and the Wizard on the Mount' told the story of a journey through time to reach the Wizard in his habitat of St Michael's Mount, West Cornwall. The pantomime was delivered to enthusiastic audiences who enjoyed the mix of comedy and local history. A total of eight performances were delivered throughout a range of venues. Reviews highlighted the upbeat and uplifting performances.

**February:** Drama Express began its series of specialist workshops. The first workshop was held by songwriter Mark Newman from Newquay. Mark composed a song with the creative input of the young people from Drama Express. Mark introduced members of Drama Express to writing music through use of a keyboard and guitar. Mark's son Alfred is a member of the Drama Express group.

**March:** This month Drama Express welcomed workshops delivered by Morwenna Banks, Ed Rowe and Britain's GOT Talent finalist Jack Carrol. Each actor delivered a themed workshop relative to their profession and specialism. This enabled the young people to develop skills and knowledge transferable to stage productions. Holding Q&A sessions ensured workshops were bespoke to the young person's learning and development needs.

**April:** The young people delivered a 'showcase performance' at Newquay Lane Theatre. A total of twenty-two acts performed with a range of performing arts genres including comedy, sketches, singing, dance, acrobatics, magic and monologues. The 'judges' panel included BBC Radio Cornwall Presenter Tiffany Truscott and Drama Express patron and actor Storme Toolis.

**May:** Drama Express held workshops focusing on stage presence, positioning, and voice projection. The workshops were delivered by theatre professionals from the Minack theatre. Later in the month Drama Express delivered an outdoor performance of 'the Abridged History of Cornwall' in Boscawen Park Truro'.

**June:** More outdoor shows took place including a performance at the iconic Minack theatre. The 'full house' enjoyed showcase performances from Drama Express members including a collective sing along to the self-produced song 'Its ok to be Different'. Workshops this month included circus skills and the unique skill of puppetry.

**July:** Summer workshops enabled Drama Express to expand across Cornwall to some new locations. These included dance sessions with Drama Express dance coach Marie Street. Young people from Drama Express who are wheelchair users performed their own composition choreographed by Marie.

**August:** Summer holiday workshops were held in locations across Cornwall. A central theme of improvisation enabled young people new to Drama Express to get an insight into the approach that is taken to ensure inclusion throughout all activities and the empowerment of creative expression. An X Factor event was held at Newquay with 18 competitors delivering acts which included many skills gained from the workshop programme.

**September:** This month the young people began preparation for their Christmas production that was to be delivered commencing in early November. The production was titled "The Twelve Ways of Christmas". An original Drama Express production the show will focus on themes associated with Christmas that will be re-enacted on stage by the young people. The young people auditioned for various roles in line with the script.

**October:** In continuing with Christmas show rehearsals workshops ran concurrently to the rehearsals. Workshops focused on creative writing with some smaller venues for these 'round the table' workshops looking at writing styles including poetry and verse. Creative writing also provided the opportunity to adapt the Christmas show script.

**November:** The Drama Express Christmas production was delivered at a range of venues throughout Cornwall commencing at The Newquay Lane Theatre on November 15<sup>th</sup>. Feedback from reviews highlighted the professionalism of everyone connected to the production and the team spirit during performances. Many people commented that the show was a great way to start off the run up to Christmas celebrations.

**December** The annual Drama Express Christmas party for the young people included Drama games and an opportunity to consult the young people about suggestions for Drama Express activities in 2024. In December we also held a session to begin writing a play based on the Mr FlannelFoot books by local author Foz Foster. The play titled 'Schools Out at Sockley Hall will be premiered on May 29th at the Minack Theatre.

Early **January 2024** Drama Express celebrated the outstanding achievements of the young people through the 'Oscars' event. A total of 26 awards were presented at the glitzy event held at the Penventon Hotel in Redruth. Kirsten Gibbs from the Ragdoll Foundation commented on the event.

*"Thank you so much for inviting John and myself to attend the Drama Express Oscars. It was the most amazing experience, and we will both remember the pure joy of the event for many years to come. We loved meeting some of your young people and families (and PAs) and hearing what Drama Express means to them. Being part of the group clearly builds confidence, performance skills, friendships, a solid support network, and more – as well as being great fun. I don't have enough positive words to express how special the afternoon was – thank you again for inviting us".*

Kirsten Gibbs, The Ragdoll Foundation

Below are a selection of photos from 2023 workshops and Oscars Event

