



**The story of a new show for children
touring in local libraries**



Working in partnership with Leicester Library Services, The Spark Arts for Children developed a new piece of performance collaboratively with artists, children, teachers & librarians. In summer 2013, *Tree Child* toured libraries across Leicestershire, with a programme of associated reading and storytelling opportunities for children and their families.

***Tree Child* had two distinct phases;**

Development workshops in schools

Workshops in two Leicester primary schools engaged 42 children from years 5 & 6 in a programme of research & development. The workshops created opportunities to explore new ideas and storytelling forms that were pertinent to the children.

The writer, director and puppeteer developed the script in partnership with the children, at each phase of development taking the work back into schools, until the final performance in July.

Performances in Leicester Libraries

A city wide tour of 19 libraries took place over the summer 2013. *Tree Child* was presented as part of the Summer Reading Challenge.

Attendances were excellent with 886 people attending in total. This represents an average capacity of 85% for each show, of which 64% were children.





Project Aims

The project aims were to:

- Produce a high quality theatre product that maximised the touring potential across Leicester's libraries.
- Enable Leicester Libraries to extend their offer through active engagement and participation in live performance work.
- Maximise the role of the library as a focal point for extended cultural activity.
- Create a framework for ongoing partnership work between libraries and arts organisations.

The Spark commissioned an independent evaluation of the project by De Montfort University. For a full copy of this report contact adel@thesparkarts.co.uk

Feedback from audiences and library staff indicated that the project had been extremely successful – with 90% agreeing that the project was an effective collaboration and the sort the city should encourage. 90% also went on to agree it was pitched correctly for family audiences.

Over 93% of respondents said projects such as Tree Child would have a positive impact on their child's interest in their local library.

Over 95% agreed that projects such as Tree Child improve what libraries provide to the community, enabling children and families to see and enjoy theatre and encourage children's creativity.



Feedback on *Tree Child* was extremely positive from all those involved in the project:

Staff said...

*“The fact that *Tree Child* was a performance encouraged us to have a new musical event at Westcotes Library for the summer scheme, as well as to do something a bit different at Christmas this year. Children are our future readers, so anything that encourages them to think libraries can be fun and varied is a good thing.”*

Teachers said...

“It was good that the children were seen as a source of ideas, it was an important experience for them to have their ideas validated by the creative team.”

Children said...

“This show was brilliant! I hope they do it every single year”

Audiences said...

“An engaging and energetic performance that had children and adults engaged. Lovely design. A wonderful journey for all involved, it’s a great project. More please.”





Tree Child – some key statistics:



85%

audience capacity for all performances



90%

felt the project was an effective collaboration



93%

respondents said this would have a positive impact on their child's interest in their local library



95%

said projects like this improve what libraries offer the community

Tree Child team:

The Spark Arts for Children
Adel Al-Salloum
Leicester Library Service
Paul Gobey

Creative Team

Playwright

Joseph Coelho

Director / Dramaturg

Philip Osment

Designer / Puppeteer

Sue Pyecroft

Actors

Daniel Copeland &

Bhawna Bhawsar

Composer

Arun Ghosh

Stage Manager

Laura Duncan

Evaluation

Christopher Maughan

(Associate Research Fellow)

Richard Fletcher (Researcher)

Arts and Festivals Management,

De Monfort University

Staff and children from

Spinney Hill Primary School

Hazel Primary School

Funding

Arts Council England

Leicester City Council



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ENGLAND**





“The Spark created an exciting and engaging performance in Tree Child, which helped the library service to demonstrate the impact that great books and stories can make on young people’s motivation around literacy. Leicester Libraries’ partnership with Spark is developing through each project adding considerably to the quality and impact of work undertaken. It has led to measurable improvements for our reader development aims.”

Adrian Wills, Head of Libraries and Information Services, Leicester City Council

The Spark Arts for Children exists to enable children to enjoy the opportunities for discovery offered by the arts as audiences, learners and as creators of their own art. A registered charity, it has worked with over 160,000 children and families since 2003, and runs The Spark Festival, one of the largest children’s arts festivals in the UK, alongside a host of other creative arts projects.

The success of the *Tree Child* project was possible due to the strength of the partnership with and the strong vision held by Leicester City Council. It was funded through the Arts Council England’s Strategic Touring programme.

Contact Us

If you would like to know more about the Tree Child project, a full evaluation report is available. Please contact Adel Al-Salloum, Director adel@thesparkarts.co.uk for more information or to request a copy.

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