

The cover features a large, abstract geometric design. A white triangle points towards the top right corner, set against a solid green background. The design is minimalist and modern.

# DOORWAYS

A review of Punchdrunk Enrichment projects 2013 - 2016

**Charlie Tims**

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**“This has been  
a truly magical  
experience for  
our children  
and it will stay  
with them  
forever.”**

Photo by Paul J Cochrane

**English Lead,** John Heron School, Newham

## FOREWORD

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The last three years have been an exciting period of growth and learning for Punchdrunk Enrichment. Generously supported by Paul Hamlyn Foundation, we have focused on extending the reach and scale of our projects in schools and community settings, alongside reflecting on how and why our projects are successful. We have developed an exciting enrichment strategy, seeking out new challenges and opportunities, and advancing our established practice.

Alongside this we have evaluated internally and partnered with independent academics to reflect and attempt to measure the influence and potential of what we do. This process of interrogation has been profound, informing our strategic thinking, shaping projects artistically and logistically, and embedding a reflexive approach into our work.

In 2016 we invited Charlie Tims to take stock of the insights collected to date. He has drawn together common themes and findings, and, as an outside eye, formed his own perspective on the importance of our practice. The result is this report.

It gives a sense of the breadth of Punchdrunk Enrichment’s activities and what has made them successful (or unsuccessful) – and touches on the complexities of measuring impact. We hope it acts as a compelling, inspiring resource for readers in the arts education sector, demonstrating that our approach to high quality, challenging theatre for young people and communities has real benefits for its audiences, however unfathomable those benefits may be.

Thank you for reading,

**Peter Higgin**

Director of Enrichment and Punchdrunk Village

# ABOUT

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## PUNCHDRUNK & PUNCHDRUNK ENRICHMENT

Punchdrunk develops and produces unforgettable theatrical experiences that place audience members at the very centre of a narrative. Since 2000, the company has pioneered a game-changing form of immersive theatre in which roaming audiences experience epic storytelling inside sensory theatrical worlds. Blending classic texts, physical performance, award-winning design installation and unexpected sites, the company's infectious format rejects the passive obedience usually expected of theatre audiences. Landmark Punchdrunk productions include *Faust* (2006-7), *The Masque of the Red Death* (2007-8), *The Drowned Man* (2013-14) and the company's current long-running US show, *Sleep No More*, which opened in New York in March 2011.

Since 2008, Punchdrunk Enrichment has taken the company's innovative practice into communities and schools, creating performances with and for children, young people and participants. Integral to the creation of this work is the same commitment to exemplary design and performance that defines Punchdrunk's large-scale productions for adult audiences. To date, Punchdrunk Enrichment has worked with over 80,000 participants in a range of diverse settings that include museums, hospitals, care homes and schools.

## CHARLIE TIMS

Charlie Tims is a researcher interested in art, society and learning, with 12 years experience of work in cultural policy development, evaluation and strategy. He currently works in an advisory role to the European Cultural Foundation and is an associate of the think tank Demos.

MSWW 1-



Photo by Stephen Dobbie

# 1.

## DOORS TO OTHER WORLDS

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A village green turns up in a care home. A labyrinthine library, with a copy of every book ever written, materialises in an East London primary school. A secondary school becomes a computer game. Punchdrunk Enrichment open doors to other worlds, embedded within those participants already know.

Punchdrunk Enrichment is a part of Punchdrunk, the theatre company. With five staff, a team of freelancers and a 780 square foot prop store, it remixes and riffs on Punchdrunk's practices and places them in social settings. The 'door to another world' common to Punchdrunk productions is moved from a performance setting into schools, museums and care homes - places where participants might have less access to this kind of work. Punchdrunk is named after the emotion it seeks to induce in audiences - that of feeling 'punch-drunk' and pleasantly dizzy with potential - and Punchdrunk Enrichment gives this feeling a new direction.

Using immersive theatre as a tool to educate, care, explain and enlighten is new, exploratory work. Just as the children who experience Punchdrunk Enrichment projects struggle to put it into words, we are only just finding out what it can do and what uses it can be put to. This report sets out what we know so far about Punchdrunk Enrichment's work. It draws together

findings from evaluations, as well as observations and descriptions in video and written documentation of Punchdrunk Enrichment projects since 2012. Unlike other work in more established fields of arts education - work that knows what it is looking for and how to measure it - this is less charted, more experimental territory. And at first glance it's hard not to be beguiled.

All art is a form of gift giving, which is why art has a difficult relationship with money. Scholar Lewis Hyde argued something like this in his classic 1983 essay about the creative spirit, *The Gift*. It's fair to assume that he might be interested in Punchdrunk Enrichment. The secretly-built installations which feature at the heart of so many Punchdrunk Enrichment projects are effectively giant wrapped presents which can be walked, climbed or crawled into.

But there isn't much room for error. There's no off-button for an art form that seizes reality, occupies personal space and hijacks imagination. And so it is that Punchdrunk Enrichment has developed methods, rules and practices that ensure people feel liberated by an experience, rather than limited. Ultimately Punchdrunk Enrichment tries to give people the best kind of presents - the ones they don't even know they want until they open them.

Although Punchdrunk Enrichment takes people to other worlds, the hope is that it can change the one they inhabit. In schools where the arts are increasingly marginalised, Punchdrunk Enrichment demonstrates the power art, artists and theatre can have on educational outcomes. Participation in these projects is also indicative of many teachers' faith in art as an important way to form young people's values, when other social and governmental signals would have us believe it is an add-on, a luxury or something for spare time. This is as true of schools as it is for the other organisations Punchdrunk Enrichment works with. Each Punchdrunk Enrichment project includes workshops for teachers, carers and managers to enable them to take things from Punchdrunk Enrichment's practices and apply it to their work. All set out to establish stories that can take on a life of their own, long after Punchdrunk's involvement is over.

This report is divided into three parts. The section that follows looks at case studies of Punchdrunk Enrichment practices: what projects have set out to achieve, how they did it and (where possible) what the results were. As compelling as these descriptions are, readers should also refer to a series of films documenting the projects on the Punchdrunk UK YouTube channel. The section that follows puts the case studies into a recognisable pattern - picking out the typical phases of a Punchdrunk Enrichment project, asking what makes a project work and assessing the different purposes to which a project can be put. In the final section we look at what it means for Punchdrunk Enrichment to grow. A theatre company that is taking a new form of practice to new social settings to try new things, does not 'scale up' or replicate easily. Growth has to mean something else, so in that section we look at what 'getting bigger' in other ways could mean.

It's hard to prove what difference any art form makes, let alone something as unusual, surprising and hard to isolate as a visit to a Punchdrunk world. Even if a class in a school experiencing a Punchdrunk Enrichment project could be evaluated against a control group of similar children, stripping out the influence of different teachers, peers and learning abilities, the full effects of a project might not be known for years until participants have recalled their experience in light of new encounters, events and opportunities.

While we wait, perhaps we should ask who knows best. For anyone sceptical about the power of Punchdrunk Enrichment they should look no further than the teachers in Hackney and Newham, who observed that 70% of their pupils increased by one or two levels in story-writing after participating in the project *The Lost Lending Library*. Or to the researchers who, in two different primary schools, found children previously believed to be mute who spoke in school for the first time.

Punchdrunk Enrichment, like the experiences it creates, only needs people to believe in it.





# 2.

## OTHER WORLDS

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A large brown box containing four storyboards is misdirected to a primary school classroom. In the afternoon Wynn and Wendy, screenwriters from a local film studio called Temple Studios, come to collect them. Noting their interesting occupation, the teacher asks them to tell the children about their work. Wynn and Wendy explain that their job is to come up with ideas for films, but that lately they have been finding it hard to write any good stories. 'It's years since Temple Studios made a film', they say. When they notice that the children have a classroom full of books, they ask them what they think makes a good story. Hoping the children will develop some stories for them, they unpack their storyboards and show the class how they work. Wynn and Wendy are surprised by how good their ideas are, so leave the storyboards with the class.

Wynn and Wendy, of course, are performers from Punchdrunk Enrichment, the teacher is in on it and Temple Studios is actually the set of *The Drowned Man*, a public-facing Punchdrunk production located in a vast, disused sorting office in Paddington, West London. The following week the children visit the studios and, in another ruse, are guided around the set of a film which has the working title of *The Mystery of San Bernardino*, but currently has no script. They are charged with writing it.





Over the last eight years Punchdrunk Enrichment has been teasing people from their everyday lives into extraordinary stories and imaginary worlds. Each project or production is different. Some, like *Searching for Stories* at Temple Studios, make use of sets, buildings and equipment available at the time, but most create a story from scratch in the building of a partner organisation. And the partnership is about more than space. These case studies show what happens when Punchdrunk Enrichment's expertise in creating imaginary worlds is combined with the ethos of these different organisations. Sometimes this is teaching by other means, sometimes it is another way of making community theatre, and sometimes it is something altogether quite different. We will now look at how this has played out in five different settings; in a primary school, a secondary school, a museum, a care home and with an inclusive theatre group.

Photo by Paul J Cochrane



Photo by Paul J Cochrane



# THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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## THE LOST LENDING LIBRARY

Punchdrunk Enrichment's first project was called *Under the Eiderdown* and took place in primary schools between 2009-12. Taking inspiration from the children's book *Who Are You, Stripy Horse?* by Karen Wall and Jim Helmore, Punchdrunk Enrichment covertly constructed a magical bric-à-brac shop in a school, based on ideas gathered from children in a workshop. The project encouraged children to write stories inspired by objects in the shop. It ran for three years in 30 primary schools and an early years centre in six London boroughs, reaching 10,000 pupils. Punchdrunk Enrichment's own evaluation of the project documented improvements to Key Stage One and Two writing, speaking and listening skills. It highlights an example of a pupil at Sir Francis Drake Primary School in Lewisham considered to be an elective mute by her teachers, who spoke fluently after visiting the bric-à-brac shop.<sup>1</sup>

*The Lost Lending Library* was an evolution of *Under the Eiderdown*. Since



2014, the project has taken place in 28 primary schools in London. Like *Under the Eiderdown*, *The Lost Lending Library* takes inspiration from a children's book; *How To Live Forever* by Colin Thompson, which tells the story of a boy who journeys through a magical library in search of immortality. The aim of the project is to inspire children to read and write more, by making the children believe that they have been commissioned to write for a magical library that travels the world collecting stories. Emma Miles, a researcher who has written a study of *The Lost Lending Library* describes it as 'endowing [them] with a belief in themselves as apprentice story-writers'.<sup>2</sup>

A survey of 100 teachers in six primary schools in Newham suggests that this has been a successful approach. Before and after the project, 57% of teachers reported that their pupils' reading improved by one level, 13% by two. The results were similar for story-writing too. 75% of the teachers identified themselves as being 'highly likely' (the highest level available in the survey) to recommend the project to other schools.<sup>3</sup> An identical survey of 87 teachers in Hackney in 2014 produced similar results to those in Newham.<sup>4</sup>

*The Lost Lending Library* begins with a visit from a Punchdrunk Enrichment performer in character as Petra; a prim, jumper-wearing freelance librarian with oversized glasses. She visits classes explaining she has come to the school to find out more about books they like and how they would improve their library. Petra shows some of her favourite books and the class discover that she also likes *How To Live Forever* - a book they have read earlier in the school year. There is a hint of mystery when Petra draws a book from her bag that won't open, but otherwise the visit conforms to the children's expectations of what such visits are like.

When the children arrive the following Monday morning, they are astonished to find a room in the school has been replaced by a set of bookshelves. An emergency assembly is called where the Headteacher expresses their disbelief at what has happened and asks the children if they know what is going on. When the children return to their class, they discover a book that bears the hallmark of the Lost Lending Library. During the rest of the day, Petra returns to the classrooms explaining that these books are invitations. She takes children in groups of 10 to the bookshelf, where they discover that Petra's mysterious locked book is a key that opens the door. Petra sends them into the Lost Lending Library alone.

They creep through a dimly lit, chaotically organised library which smells



of old leather, candle wax and wood polish. Books of all girths and hues are crammed together on the shelves, their stories almost growing out of them. Looking carefully, pupils might catch sight of a grasshopper sitting on a cover, paper birds cut from pages, reels of camera negatives weaving in and out of an atlas and a book that has a tree growing inside it. In this jungle of ideas, they might also notice other books they have read in class recently.

At the end of their short walk through the bookcases they meet a guardian of the Lost Lending Library called Peabody, who sits in the corner of another room stuffed to the gunnels with more books. Peabody tells the children about the Lost Lending Library and reads them a story that comes alive around them. They hear the sound of a bird circling the room, a book that gurgles as though full of water and see a toy train winding along the edge of a bookcase. She explains to them that the Lost Lending Library travels to places where the most imaginative people can be found and that it has been guided to this precise location by the books Petra has collected from their classroom.

Peabody receives a phone call on a bakelite wind-up telephone from Gillian,

Photo by Paul J Cochrane



another guardian of the Library, who can interpret messages the Library sends through the sounds of its shifting bookcases. She tells Peabody that the Lost Lending Library is communicating its desire for the children to become apprentice story-writers for the Library, and Peabody then spots an empty shelf waiting for their stories. The children are sent away with her request for stories, and leave the Library by crawling through the horticulture department; a mossy tunnel of ferns, leaves and books that leads back to the school.

Miles's report on *The Lost Lending Library* focused on one Newham primary school in summer 2015. As in the case of *Under the Eiderdown*, she observed Year 2 pupils who had previously not spoken in school articulate their thoughts for the first time. All teachers spoke of their pupils' increased desire to talk. One Reception teacher told her, 'I'd say every single child has a moment of being desperate to write'.<sup>5</sup> Miles also heard reports of children who demanded to be taken to their local library and had started writing stories at home.

All teachers know that the best teaching is that which inspires children to learn for themselves - especially those to whom it does not come easily. Emma Miles notes an example:

'A younger member of the Reception class, Silai, who had been lower achieving for writing, stands out... She came to the writing table independently during the children's free choice of activity. The teacher later told me this was unusual. There, she wrote about Peabody buying herself some new clothes and accessories, using the graphemes for some key sounds but writing without finger spaces. The teacher noticed her eagerness and suggested they try it again, this time using finger spaces... Silai wrote for the first time with the sounds and spaces that allowed her work to be read by others; her pleasure and pride at this achievement was palpable.'<sup>6</sup>

After children crawl from the Library they are taken to a 'decompression room' where they put their thoughts and feelings to pen and paper. Over the following two weeks the Lost Lending Library and Petra stay in the school and the children have a chance to visit again with a teacher. Petra conducts a further story-writing workshop. After two weeks in the school the Lost Lending Library disappears as quietly as it arrived. The pupils are given gold life-membership cards of the Library in acknowledgement of the excellent stories they have written.

As well as inspiring children to write, talk and tell stories, *The Lost Lending Library* aims to help teachers develop new teaching methods to inspire children. Punchdrunk Enrichment run two professional development sessions within each project delivery. The first prepares them for the arrival of the Library, the roles they will need to play and how they might incorporate the project into their lesson plans. The second helps teachers think about different techniques they could use to keep *The Lost Lending Library* and the energy it inspires alive. In the past this has involved sending stories to the Lost Lending Library through a special postbox, corresponding with Petra and Peabody through letters and postcards and inking pupils' stories with a special Lost Lending Library rubber stamp.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas et al, 7

<sup>2</sup> Miles, 12

<sup>3</sup> Punchdrunk Enrichment, 2014, 1

<sup>4</sup> Punchdrunk Enrichment, 2015, 1

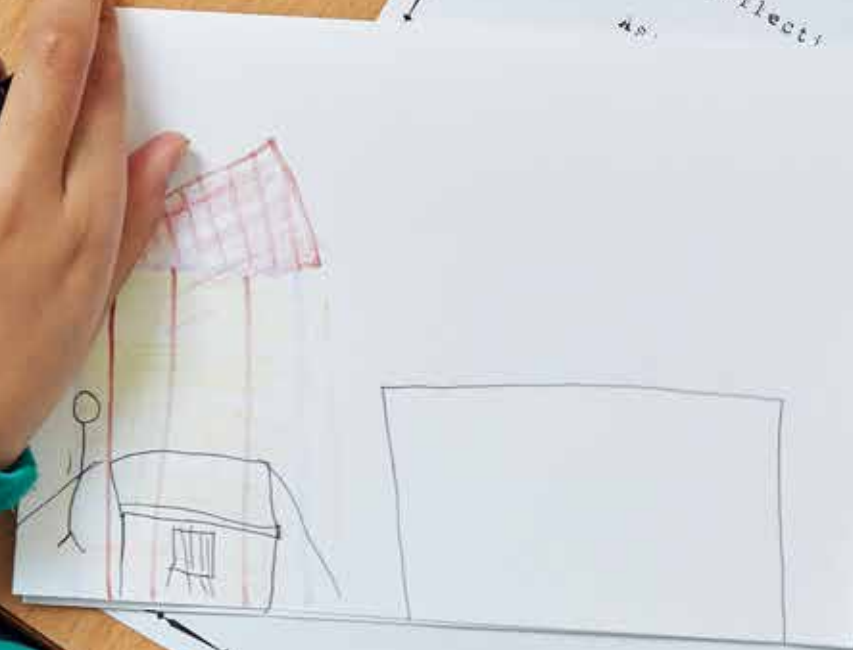
<sup>5</sup> Miles, 13


<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 16

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 26



**“It’s like we  
went into  
*How to Live  
Forever.*”**





# THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

## PROSPERO'S ISLAND

*Prospero's Island* was an immersive game that reimagined a secondary academy school as the remote island in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. It took place during the autumn term of 2014-15. The game required pupils aged 11-13 to complete challenges which would reveal the plot, key characters and themes 'locked' in the play's language.

Riffing on quest-based video games like *Assassin's Creed* and TV shows from the 1990s like *The Krypton Factor* and *The Crystal Maze*, *Prospero's Island* used rooms, lockers and tents across the school as locations for solving different challenges which would 'unlock' the story.

The game's activities were directed from the Dark Centre of Operations (actually the school's reading room, transformed into a shady back-room gambling den) where a Games Master would speak to the pupils from the darkness giving them instructions, clues and prompts. In the initial stages of the game, pupils used a key to open a cabinet in the centre of the room which flipped over to reveal a map of the school, overlaid with key locations from *The Tempest*.



Most levels required the pupils to work together with Punchdrunk Enrichment facilitators to solve a challenge in the Dark Centre before breaking into smaller groups to undertake missions elsewhere in the school. The school greenhouse was turned into Prospero's Magic Lab, complete with glass-fronted cases of medicine bottles, measuring glasses, brass pots and demijohns. A bedouin tent on the school's roof - a place students are not usually allowed to go - provided a dramatic location for the Nobles' Camp.

Each level of the game corresponded to a different scene from *The Tempest*. As they moved through the game's levels, finding codes, unlocking briefcases and revealing panels, the pupils were also moving through the play, encountering the plot, its characters and themes.

Shakespearean language is difficult to understand - 'locked' perhaps. Turning the play into a game effectively reassured the pupils that there would be a way of understanding the words, even if initially it wasn't clear. It also reassured them that there would be a reward, which would make the effort worthwhile. Although 'Shakespeare as an immersive game' sounds like a way of diluting Shakespeare, the game was actually encouraging pupils to engage with Shakespearean terminology in its full form.

Unlike other Punchdrunk Enrichment projects, there was no pretense that *Prospero's Island* was 'real' - but completing exercises to time, encountering parts of the school students had not been in before and being allowed to transgress some school rules (like not having to wear blazers) gave them the sense of being immersed in a world unlike that of school, lessons and classrooms. For some this was a surprising pleasure. One pupil said, 'I thought it was going to be really boring - I wanted to do trampolining, and then actually it was much better than trampolining.' Another that 'they made it exciting, like we didn't know what was happening and it was a mystery'.<sup>8</sup>

After the game, students testified to the power of being inside a story. One reflected, 'when you're passing through it, you'll remember it [but when] you read it, sometimes you forget it'.<sup>9</sup> Another thought that 'getting a clear image or a scenery [showing] what it would have been like' helped.<sup>10</sup>

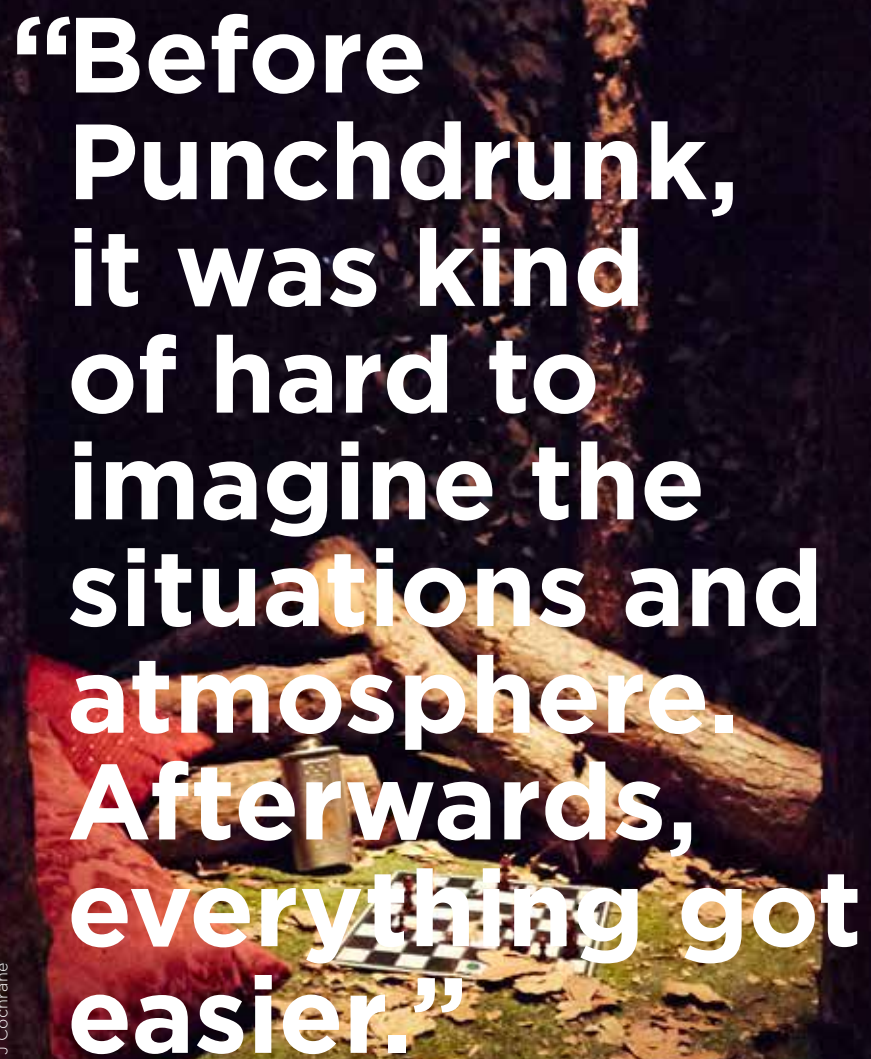
These quotes are taken from an Open University evaluation of the project conducted on behalf of Punchdrunk and Hackney Learning Trust, who were also partners in the project. The study included an analysis of the performance of 112 Year 7 students in two written exercises based on *The Tempest* - one



Photo by Paul J Cochrane

completed before and another after the Punchdrunk Enrichment experience. It showed that 65% of Year 7 students who took part in *Prospero's Island* improved their assessed writing scores by at least one sub-level following the immersive experience - the average change was of almost two sub-levels.<sup>11</sup> A similar proportion of students who took part in the project also said their personal motivation or engagement in English had improved.<sup>12</sup>

All 12 teachers interviewed by the Open University believed that it had improved students' understanding of *The Tempest*, with one noting their class displaying an 'increased confidence, interest in Shakespeare and a willingness



**“Before  
Punchdrunk,  
it was kind  
of hard to  
imagine the  
situations and  
atmosphere.  
Afterwards,  
everything got  
easier.”**

Photo by Paul J Cochrane

Year 7 pupil

to volunteer suggestions.’

One teacher observed a student with reading difficulties who, after taking part in *Prospero’s Island*, demanded to borrow *The Tempest* from the library. A fortnight later the teacher noted the student positing himself as ‘in the know’ amongst his classmates and showing an interest in Caliban and characters which could only have come from reading the play independently.<sup>13</sup>

In fact, several teachers observed that the game levelled the playing field between higher and lower achieving students. One said, ‘what I found most impressive was watching students who generally are either disengaged or [have] behavioural problems and them just jumping in’. They thought lower achieving students did better, because the game required quick-fire responses which ultimately favoured pupils who were more used to - and less afraid of - giving the wrong answer. Perhaps the alternative rules at work in Punchdrunk Enrichment’s projects also explain why evaluations of *Under the Eiderdown*, *The Lost Lending Library* and *Prospero’s Island* have all also noted boys as being specifically engaged and impacted by the project.<sup>14</sup>

Teachers also reported students having more ideas than usual. One student said ‘When we’re reading the book, Miss says, ‘try and imagine how it looks’... but when we went to the Punchdrunk we could actually imagine how it was.’<sup>15</sup> Other teachers observed ‘evidence of advanced vocabulary in writing’ and that their students said ‘writing was easier and more enjoyable’.<sup>16</sup> Another reported that pupils were ‘far more willing to be dramatic’ in English.<sup>17</sup>

*Prospero’s Island* was also accompanied by a teaching and learning day, and eight professional development evening sessions on immersive learning techniques for schools and staff across London. Teachers reported that after the completion of the project they had chosen to integrate a wider range of stimuli to support and inspire the students to write creatively - including music, sound effects, objects and images. One teacher reported ‘playing an extract of music, asking students to describe it, sketch an image that the music brought to mind, and note down words that describe the emotion experienced.’<sup>18</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Cremin et al, 52

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, 79

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, 78

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, 71

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, 71

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, 56

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, 67

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, 47

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, 80

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, 68

<sup>18</sup>Ibid, 5





Photo by Stephen Dobbie

# THE MUSEUM

## AGAINST CAPTAIN'S ORDERS

*Against Captain's Orders* was an immersive theatre production at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich in 2015, which took children aged 6-12 on an adventure through the museum's (imaginary) stores, archives and back-offices - the 'forbidden places' museum visitors are not supposed to go - but perhaps wish they could. It required children to face a fearful situation and tap into their bravery, courage and conviction.

The magic began in the first 10 minutes, when the children were gently eased away from what seemed like a run-of-the-mill museum school trip. It went something like this.

A party of school children, already kitted out with beige life-jackets, are taken by two Punchdrunk Enrichment performers posing as museum curators, into the kind of 'fun education room' children recognise. There are boats to sit in and objects in tubular glass cases to look at which are symbolic of their owner's courage. They hold the sextant William Bligh carried with him as he was forced from *The Bounty*; the telescope through which Grace Darling first saw the passengers of a stricken paddle steamer she would later rescue, drumsticks that Sir Francis Drake declared would call him from the grave to the defence of England and a bottle from the HMS Royal George. In the corner of the room there are two doors - one that appears to lead to the next room in the exhibition, and another which looks more like a security door. The curators ask the children to fill out sheets describing the objects that they see in the cases. The bottle from HMS Royal George has a rolled-up note inside, which is only just visible. Later, when the children include the note in their descriptions, the curators initially dismiss it as a mistake. But after looking closer, they tell the children that they have made an incredible discovery.

A debate then begins about whether they should open the case and attempt to read the note. One curator, the straight-laced Arthur, is against it, saying

that it would break the museum's rules to interfere with exhibits. But the other curator, Glan, passionately says they should remove the bottle and find out what the note says. With the children, she urges Arthur on. He gingerly reaches into the cabinet and touches the bottle. At this point, the lights cut, an alarm sounds and the objects are sucked up from their cases, swishing through pipes which fan out across the ceiling.

The objects have been taken back to the museum's storage and the children go with Glan and Arthur - through the anonymous looking door at the side of the room - to find the objects and bring them back to the museum, all before the emergency museum lockdown begins.

Between spring and summer 2015, *Against Captain's Orders* was performed to 33,000 6-12 year olds and their families. In 2016 it was shortlisted in the Museums and Heritage Awards under the category of 'Best Educational Initiative'.

The idea was developed through a series of visits to the National Maritime Museum. 'We wanted to find out about the stories that the museum couldn't tell but would like to,' says Peter Higgin. This included one-to-one interviews, observations of the day-to-day activities in the museum and three workshops with museum staff that introduced them to Punchdrunk's practice. These workshops were the first time that the museum had looked at its archives (or even the idea of them) as a resource that could be used to stimulate the public.

For the remaining 30 minutes of the production, Glan and Arthur lead the children through an archetypal Punchdrunk world. Old institutional corridors lead to rooms packed with filing cabinets, piled high with globes, rolled up plans and half-finished research projects, with maps, photographs, magnifying glasses and inky notes pinned to walls and spread over desks. The children solve puzzles that enable them to recover the lost objects, all the while trying to avoid being discovered by the museum's management and return to the exhibition room before the museum goes into emergency security lockdown. In the climactic moments, the children narrowly escape the museum stores, but Arthur is left trapped inside. Just when all appears lost, he finds a way to transport himself with the lost objects back through the same vacuum tubes that had originally sucked them away. He crashes back into the room, hair and glasses askew.

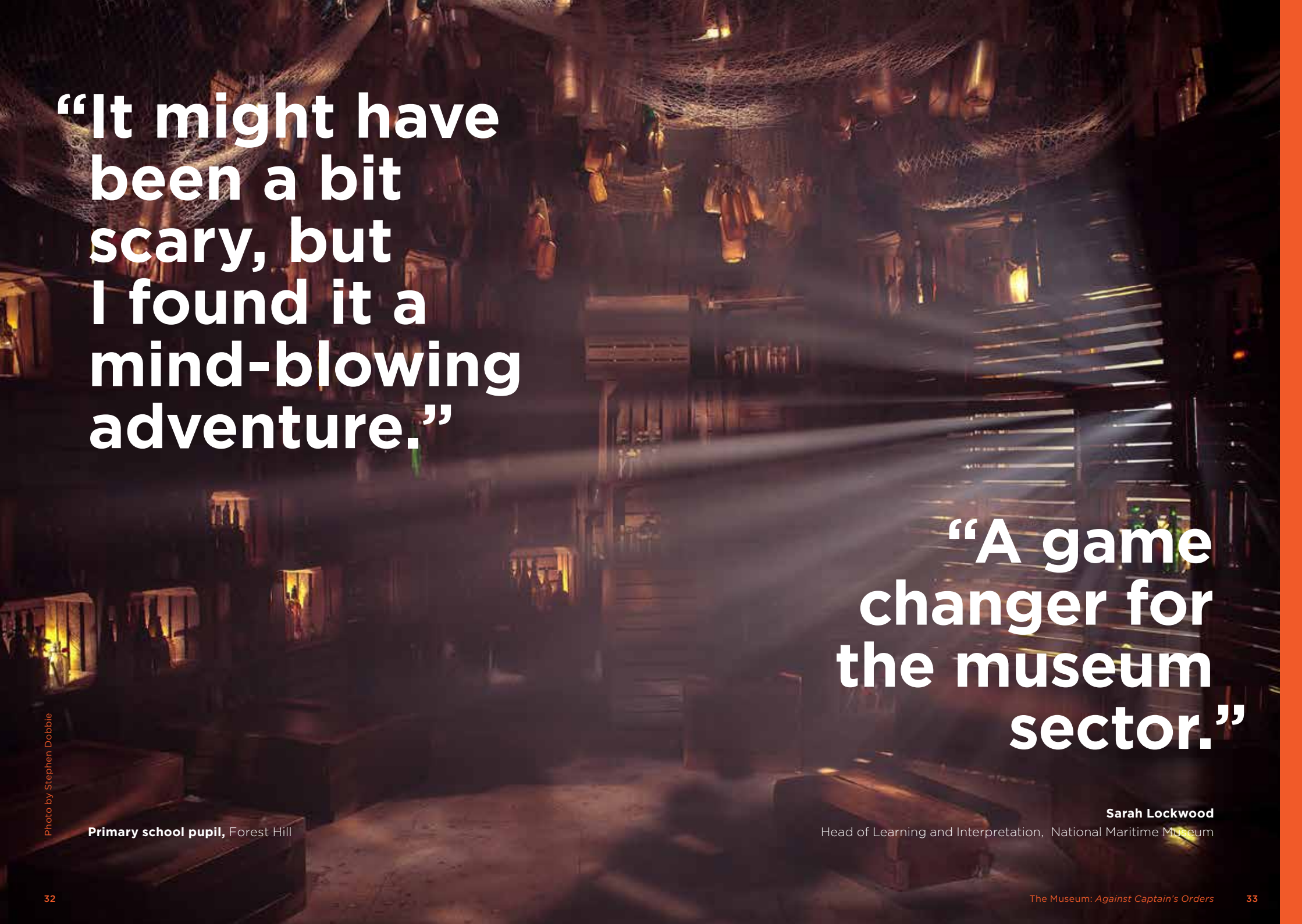
In the final scene, buttoned-up Arthur - now giddy with his conversion to rule-

breaking - tells the children to go out into the museum and look with fresh eyes, to be curious and inquisitive and to stop at nothing in the pursuit of knowledge. 'The message is that anyone can make history. We wanted any one of those audiences, young or old to feel like they were the explorers', says Peter Higgin.

For the National Maritime Museum, *Against Captain's Orders* marked the start of a new approach to programming its special exhibition gallery, and was its first family-specific offering. Sarah Lockwood, Head of Learning and Interpretation at the museum, called the production a 'game changer for the museum sector'.<sup>19</sup> Museums already find ways to simulate moments in history, and as such are natural accomplices to immersive theatre practice. *Against Captain's Orders* did more than this, by putting young people not in a different time, but in a different mindset - that of someone who pushes boundaries, responds with their own resolve and learns through experiential engagement. Taking the potential of the museum exhibition further, the project, and educational immersive theatre like it, can enable museums to achieve far greater levels of youth engagement with their collections.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted from *Against Captain's Orders* video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=YymSj\\_-PB3g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YymSj_-PB3g)



A dark, atmospheric museum exhibit. The ceiling is covered with a complex web of hanging lanterns and light fixtures, some of which are illuminated, casting a warm glow. The walls are lined with display cases, some of which are open, revealing various objects. The floor is dark and reflective. The overall mood is mysterious and immersive.

**“It might have  
been a bit  
scary, but  
I found it a  
mind-blowing  
adventure.”**

Photo by Stephen Dobbie

Primary school pupil, Forest Hill

**“A game  
changer for  
the museum  
sector.”**

**Sarah Lockwood**

Head of Learning and Interpretation, National Maritime Museum



Photo by Paul J. Cochrane

# THE CARE HOME

## GREENHIVE GREEN

Between January and March 2016, Punchdrunk Enrichment undertook a three-month residency at Greenhive Care Home in Peckham, South London, that provides supported accommodation to around 50 people aged 75 and above. Greenhive's operators Anchor support 40,000 people across the UK, and believe that well-planned arts activities can help start important friendships and conversations. Anchor has previously formed partnerships with museums, festivals and radio stations.

The residency was one of four organised by Magic Me, a well established intergenerational arts organisation who, amongst other things, find ways to bring arts into care homes.<sup>20</sup>

Part game, part soap opera, *Greenhive Green* gave residents a chance to take a seat on the committee of the imagined village of Greenhive. Every Tuesday for eight weeks, eight residents would meet at a table in the centre of a specially designed installation, complete with pub, hedgerows, castle wall, policeman's callbox, noticeboard, park bench and an ominously empty florists. In the first week the committee learned that the Mayor of Greenhive was away from the village and so each week they would have to take decisions on her behalf. In her absence, they would have to work on rebuilding relations between Greenhive and the neighbouring village of Blarford.

This was the first time that Punchdrunk Enrichment had worked in a care home. Alex Rowse, Punchdrunk's Enrichment Producer, says that of all the groups that the team have worked with to date, the residents of Greenhive challenged Punchdrunk's approach to experiential storytelling the most. Everything from the level of the lighting (older people find it harder to see in



dimmer light), the space for seating to the volume of sound effects, had to be modified. Some adjustments were more fundamental.

While most Punchdrunk Enrichment work involves doing everything possible to ensure that participants believe that a scenario is real, at *Greenhive Green* it was important to remind participants - many of whom could be easily confused - that it wasn't. So the transition into the world of the Greenhive village was done as gently as possible. Each session would begin at the committee table, with tea and biscuits and introductions from the Punchdrunk Enrichment team, after which Greenhive Green would be 'woken up' with lights brightening inside the village windows, the playing of a soaring soundscape, and the arrival of the village (toy) train in the room. The effect was similar to the opening credits of a soap opera.

Most weeks, the committee worked on creative activities that would rebuild relations between the villages. These included making 'diplomacy cakes', entering an inter-village floral arrangement competition and composing a village anthem. At each meeting the committee produced a newsletter, which was distributed around Greenhive, shared with residents' families and friends and pinned to the village noticeboard.

These activities sensitively overlaid normal life in the care home. In many ways the committee members could continue to be themselves and the story would still work - or, if they wished, they could play along and become more actively involved. At the time of writing, four months after the end of the project, the village committee continues to meet around the *Greenhive Green* table.

A cornerstone of the Greenhive plot was the tale of the empty florists. The story was that the florists had been empty for years after its owner had been ostracised from the village for falling in love with a man from Blarford. When she left the village, the story went, she gave the shop key to the mayor, telling her that the florists should remain closed for as long as there was bad blood between the villages.

The original intention was for this to be slowly revealed each week, but as it was hard for some residents to recall precisely what had happened from one week to the next, another way of revealing the story had to be found. The sessions each week became more orientated towards rectifying relations with Blarford, rather than revealing the story.



**“You always  
find something  
new about  
a resident:  
something  
that they  
might tell you,  
something that  
they might do,  
that you never  
knew”**

Photo by Paul J Cochrane

Manager, Greenhive



Photo by Stephen Dobbie

The choice of a soap opera aesthetic provided a natural way to give participants - many of whom struggled with memory - the reminders they needed, without it feeling contrived. Participants were also given a map of the village and its surroundings, the village noticeboard provided a way to help participants remember what had happened in previous weeks, and each session began with participants reintroducing themselves.

The project culminated with a party to celebrate the achievements of the committee, which was attended by 89 residents, friends and family members. During the party the long-absent Mayor returned to celebrate the restoration of cordial relations with Blarford. She also reopened the florists and explained why it had been closed for so long.

For Anchor, a project like *Greenhive Green* matters, not just because it brings art into a setting where it wouldn't usually be, but also because it shows a side of the residents' personalities that might not otherwise come out. As one manager from Greenhive put it:

'Seeing customers in ways they wouldn't normally [is important]. Sometimes it's something small that you see in a person, which can actually help you to have a full picture of that person and provide adequate care to that person.'<sup>21</sup>



Photo by Stephen Dobbie

<sup>20</sup>For more information about Magic Me's Artist's Residencies in Care Homes project see: <http://magicme.co.uk/artists-residencies/>

<sup>21</sup>Langford, 24





Photo by Simon Gough

# THE THEATRE GROUP

## BENEATH THE STREETS

**'Working with Punchdrunk Enrichment to create *Beneath the Streets* was a hugely rewarding experience for both our participants and our staff team. Their mind boggling attention to detail, a total commitment to creating a truly complete audience experience, while also providing a fulfilling experience for all those that worked on creating the production, are just some of the elements we have carried with us into our future work.'**

Ben Pettitt-Wade, Artistic Director, Hijinx

As well as creating projects in organisations, Punchdrunk Enrichment have also developed work with inclusive theatre companies and in inclusive settings.

In 2011 they created *The Uncommercial Traveller*; a walking tour with a 20-minute immersive, theatrical performance, made in collaboration with 16 members of Arcola 60+, a community theatre group for the over-60s associated with the Arcola Theatre in Dalston, East London.

Punchdrunk Enrichment worked with the group to conceive, write and perform the show. This is less of a departure from the cases described so far. Both a production like *The Uncommercial Traveller* and a project like *The Lost Lending Library* involve creating environments that enable people to feel

different - whether they are performers or audiences.

In her book *Immersive Theatres* (2013), Josephine Machon recorded a conversation between Punchdrunk Enrichment and several performers from Arcola 60+. One, Janet Evans, remembering the first time she walked into the set, said 'when we went into that place it was like you'd given us a big gift - it was like Christmas. We were going along with it not really knowing what you were on about and when we got in there, we saw exactly'.<sup>22</sup> The audiences, we can presume, would have felt much the same. As Peter Higgin told Machon, 'What we created was just a framework and an inspiration point...in which we were giving agency to the performers to go out and find what those stories were'.<sup>23</sup> He could have just as easily been talking about audiences.

Creating a show that plays to people's strengths - especially ones which are not usually seen as strengths - can be an empowering experience. As another performer told Machon, 'It was the one show [we've done], where it was an advantage to be old'.<sup>24</sup>

In 2014, Punchdrunk Enrichment built on this project by undertaking a residency with Hijinx, a Wales-based theatre company who work with actors with and without learning difficulties. As with Arcola 60+, the purpose was to collaboratively create an environment which would play to the natural strengths of the Hijinx performers. It took place in a vacant Victorian shopping arcade in central Cardiff, and was nominated for Best Production in English at the Wales Theatre Awards 2015. It was re-imagined with the same cast in 2015 in an antiques market also in Cardiff.

The story of *Beneath the Streets* (2015) was devised during a series of workshops Punchdrunk Enrichment led for 15 Hijinx performers. The performance they went on to create concerns the activities of Found You Corp - an international trading post for lost and found items. At ground level Found You Corp seemed like a regular lost property service, but below ground, things were more sinister. Here, members of Found You Corp could be found collecting stranger items - lost memories, lost loves, lost attachments and lost plots. As director Matthew Blake from Punchdrunk Enrichment put it, Found You Corp was also collecting 'the more abstract things we lose'.

Perhaps the Punchdrunk performance style, which enables performers to highlight their strengths, is a natural fit for companies that aim to include

people in the theatre who are sometimes ignored outside it. To begin with, audience members surrender their personal space, literally putting themselves on the same level as the performers. Nobody is 'looked down on'. Also, immersive theatre levels the ground between performers themselves, as they are all present for the same amount of time. Above all, in Punchdrunk productions, the smell, scenographic details and sounds carry the story as much as the performers. Because the heavy lifting (the carpentry, the prop sourcing, the lighting) is completed by designers, technicians and carpenters, the only limit on a collaborator's ability to contribute ideas to the story is their imagination - not their technical abilities as a performer. Peter Higgin calls this 'servicing people's creativity with the highest possible production values'.



Photo by Simon Gough

<sup>22</sup>Machon, 219

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 226

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, 224

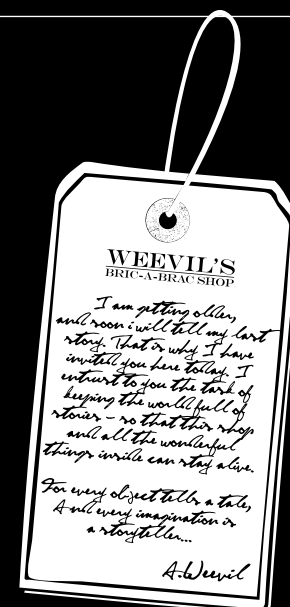


Photo by Paul J Cochrane

# 3.

## HOW IT'S DONE

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## 3.1

# A PUNCHDRUNK ENRICHMENT EXPERIENCE IN SEVEN PARTS

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Punchdrunk Enrichment have found ways to work with a wide range of organisations, age groups, abilities and circumstances, and woven through these projects is a common method and experience for participants. Crucially, they also tell us about the power of entering other worlds.

## A RESPONSE TO A LOCATION

Crossing a threshold usually means crossing into a place that relates to, or overlays the place that has been left behind - it is different, but not alien. Punchdrunk Enrichment use the term 'site sympathetic' to describe this relationship. At Greenhive, a close-knit care home became a close-knit village green. In *Prospero's Island*, the school reading room becomes the Dark Centre of Operations; a place for decoding text. Even though *The Lost Lending Library* is other worldly, it still has books the children have read in class. In each case, the place participants are taken to 'sympathises' with the place they have left.

## A DOOR TO ANOTHER WORLD

All Punchdrunk Enrichment projects enable participants to cross a threshold which usually, but not always, assumes a physical form. Sometimes it is literally a door, other times, as at *Greenhive Green*, it is a more perfunctory change of lighting, but the effect is the same: 'You are going somewhere else now.'





Photo by Paul J Cochrane

## A STORY THAT HAPPENS TO YOU

A sequence of events is revealed by devices which usually include: a highly detailed set you move through, performers, messages in the form of letters, triggered alarms, public announcements and telephone calls or emails. In this dreamlike world, participants are freed from much of the need to understand or interpret characters as they would in a book or a film because the story is actually happening to them. Their feelings are as much a part of the story as the characters they encounter. In their work exploring the causes and effects of Punchdrunk Enrichment's work, Josephine Machon and Charlotte Thompson call this 'an affective experience which is felt, as much as understood'.<sup>25</sup>

## A NEW ROLE

Participants have a role, usually created by other characters, who need to tell them something. It is natural for participants to become the people those characters wish them to be. Peabody addresses children as important story-writers. Wynn and Wendy address them as expert screenwriters. In her work analysing Punchdrunk Enrichment, Josephine Machon identifies the casting of children in *The Lost Lending Library* as 'experts' as essential. It provokes them to learn and solve things for themselves.<sup>26</sup> Evaluators of *The Lost Lending Library* also noticed that it works best when teachers place themselves on the same level as students.

## A SUGGESTION AS TO WHAT LIES BEYOND

Most Punchdrunk Enrichment projects carry the conceit that the participant is experiencing a tiny part of a much bigger world. This is at the heart of what makes them exciting. Participants are told that the Lost Lending Library extends over endless floors and corridors, all filled with books. The participants in *Greenhive Green* are given a map of the surrounding fields, villages and rivers.

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## A MISSION TO TAKE AWAY

In a manner similar to coming of age films, corporate training days and confirming religious experiences, Punchdrunk Enrichment projects encourage participants to take their new role with them when they return to their 'normal' lives - especially when working with young people. Usually this is an appeal to the creative spirit. At the end of *Against Captain's Orders*, Arthur commands young people to explore the National Maritime Museum and to be relentlessly curious. At the end of *The Lost Lending Library*, Peabody requests children to be story-writers for the Library.

## A WAY BACK

Projects leave open the possibility for participants to recontact the world that they visited. Often this requires the participation of organisers to keep the myth alive once Punchdrunk have left. Teachers who took part in *Under the Eiderdown* continued using Moonjuice (a magic tea used during the project), to help children summon up their story-writing powers. At the conclusion of *The Lost Lending Library*, pupils receive gold membership cards, hinting that one day they might return.

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<sup>25</sup>Machon et al, 14

<sup>26</sup>Ibid, 11

Photo by Stephen Dobbie

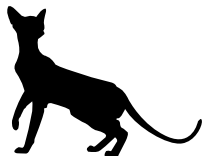


## 3.2

# THE RULES OF PUNCHDRUNK ENRICHMENT

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Creating experiences like this involves skillfully dealing with competing needs. Punchdrunk Enrichment have to make the worlds they build engrossing, without making them frightening. They have to collaborate with participants, but maintain an element of surprise. They have to make all participants feel comfortable, while offering different ways to take part. Over the last eight years it appears that Punchdrunk Enrichment has developed some principles - or rules - that make these balancing acts possible.



## STORIES COME FROM PARTNERS

While some go on to become templates which can be replicated in different schools, all productions originate in the needs, priorities and values of a partner organisation. This is why dialogue with partner organisations in workshops and interviews is important to developing the idea for the production.

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## KEEP IT SECRET

Punchdrunk Enrichment projects are a secret until they happen. Installations are built when participants are away, the company van is hidden and projects reveal themselves as stories. There are no handouts telling people what to expect. The name Punchdrunk is not mentioned - children only ever know about the Lost Lending Library. Such secrecy stops disbelief, or the desire not to suspend it, from having a chance to set in.

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## NO BYSTANDERS

All participants - be they teachers, parents, curators or care home managers, have to acknowledge that 'they believe too' by referring to characters and events as if they are real. This demonstration of belief and response is acting and improvisation by another name. In Punchdrunk Enrichment projects, you are either a recipient of an experience or a creator of it. You can move between these roles, but there is no room for bystanders.

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## BE GENTLE

Taking people to and from other worlds carries with it a duty of care. Although Punchdrunk Enrichment take people over thresholds to other worlds, this fits into a story or a pattern of events, which have begun before the threshold is crossed. So transitions are gentle. At *Greenhive Green*, the set is switched on light by light. After children leave the Lost Lending Library, they have a 'decompression room' to unwind and share their experiences.

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## LEAVE SPACE FOR PARTICIPANTS

Punchdrunk Enrichment projects provide a base level experience for all participants. But if they want to look further, to assume a role and improvise, they can. As Peter Higgin says of *Greenhive Green*, 'there's a sliding scale of engagement - on a simple level, it's a place to have a nice cup of tea - on a more sophisticated level, it's a way to explore yourself and your character.'

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## MAKE HEROES

Although Punchdrunk Enrichment projects require participants to surrender control of their imaginations and submit to a story, the purpose is to enable them to make, say and think things that otherwise they would not be able to. *Against Captain's Orders* turns children who visit a museum into people who save it. *Greenhive Green* changes people who are defined by their receipt of care, to those who give it. *The Lost Lending Library* lets children know more than their teachers.

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Photo by Paul J Cochrane

## 3.3

# THE POWER OF PUNCHDRUNK ENRICHMENT

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Punchdrunk Enrichment's work is both art and instrument. The last eight years of Punchdrunk Enrichment's work has been an exploration of the purposes to which 'feeling punch-drunk' can be put.

Here are some of them - the seven powers of Punchdrunk.

## INSPIRING SELF- EXPRESSION

At their most basic, Punchdrunk Enrichment experiences give participants something to talk about. As Punchdrunk Enrichment put it in their own evaluation of *Under the Eiderdown* - something they, 'couldn't help but talk about'.<sup>27</sup> This has been an important motivation for Punchdrunk's work in schools - *Under the Eiderdown*, *The Lost Lending Library* and *Prospero's Island* instrumentalised this desire to talk, to encourage pupils to write stories, discuss them and expand their vocabulary. As we have seen, *The Lost Lending Library* and *Under the Eiderdown* helped pupils to talk in class who had never talked before and inspired many to write their first stories.

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## UNDER- STANDING SOMETHING HARD

It is easier to understand things that happen to you than things you read or look at. Punchdrunk Enrichment experiences offer a particularly visceral way to understand a story. The observation of one teacher whose students took part in *Prospero's Island* is revealing: 'students noted having more ideas for writing than usual as they were better able to empathise with and understand the characters'.<sup>28</sup> In other words, they didn't have to read *The Tempest* to understand what *The Tempest* was about (and subsequently were able to approach the difficult text with a feeling of expertise).

## BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

Punchdrunk Enrichment create events that disrupt day-to-day life. This forges common ground between people whose interaction might previously have been limited to passing in the corridor, queuing in the canteen, sitting on the bus or passing on misdirected post. Parents and teachers. Pupils in different year groups. Residents and staff. Isolated neighbours. When *Under the Eiderdown* first took place in schools, bemused parents would phone up to ask what was going on - some of these became interested in what was going on in school for the first time. As one teacher said; 'I don't know what Punchdrunk have done, but these aren't our parents'.<sup>29</sup> These projects can help organisations to start conversations with people whose participation is difficult to foster but important to make their work effective.

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## MENTAL EXERCISE

Punchdrunk Enrichment projects are a form of mental exercise that can help individuals to build up their confidence or prepare for a challenge. The projects provide a kind of 'mental scaffolding' for the imagination. Children are regularly pushed to the point where they are almost too scared or thrilled to continue, before being returned to a place of safety, and as such learn about braving the unknown or uncertain within a supported environment.



## CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Some Punchdrunk Enrichment projects, particularly those with children, aim to cultivate values of curiosity, inquiry and self-directed learning to develop character. Most try to encourage risk-taking. *Against Captain's Orders* showed children that breaking rules can be admirable, if it is done in pursuit of knowledge and enlightenment.

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## CHANGING HOW INSTITUTIONS ARE SEEN

Punchdrunk Enrichment projects have the power to change how institutions are perceived. As Peter Higgin puts it, 'if a Narnian world can open up in a school, a school itself becomes an extraordinary and exciting place'. Because the worlds that Punchdrunk Enrichment creates dovetail with the reality of the institutions they are created in, they propose new - and magical - ways of looking at the institutions and realities participants are in. It is possible to return anytime you want, it just means seeing it through different eyes.

## CREATIVE TEACHING

As Punchdrunk Enrichment projects seek to further the goals of the partner organisation, their practice can enhance the work of managers, teachers and other staff working for it. Ultimately the power of Punchdrunk Enrichment is that it can support others to do what it does: a particularly creative form of teaching, caring or training.

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<sup>27</sup>Thomas et al, 7

<sup>28</sup>Cremin et al, 98

<sup>29</sup>Thomas et al, 13



Photo by Simon Gough

# 4.

## HARDER, BETTER, FASTER, STRONGER

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# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO DO 'MORE' OF THIS WORK?

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Relationships are important to Punchdrunk Enrichment; as the case studies in Part 2 show, preliminary workshops and meetings are important to developing new productions and projects. Even with a project with a honed formula like *The Lost Lending Library*, Punchdrunk Enrichment still has to find an interested school, develop a relationship with the Headteacher and the Head of Literacy, and engage teachers through INSET days to enable the project to work.

In this kind of relationship-based work, economies of scale don't apply. Punchdrunk Enrichment doesn't roll-out like super-fast broadband or franchise like a coffee chain. Perhaps the only way to achieve economies of scale would be to concentrate exclusively on one project - probably *The Lost Lending Library* - and establish systems to support it; a national training academy,

regional prop stores, a network of regional co-ordinators, an annual conference and a common structure for evaluation and information sharing. But even then, the project would need to adapt to the culture of different schools and build relationships with different teachers.

Experiences like the ones Punchdrunk Enrichment create can't easily be mass-produced. So scaling up, or 'growth', has to mean something other than 'more of the same' thing. Besides, the natural inclination of Punchdrunk Enrichment has always been to take immersive theatre to new places, not to settle on one way of doing things.

# WHAT COULD GROWTH MEAN FOR PUNCHDRUNK ENRICHMENT?

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## DOORS IN OTHER PLACES

Care homes aren't like schools. *Greenhive Green* demonstrated the extent to which a Punchdrunk Enrichment experience could be modified to suit a context radically different from those it had worked in previously. If Punchdrunk Enrichment works in a care home and a school, where else could it work? The seven 'powers' identified in the previous section dovetail with the needs of a whole range of different organisations. If it could work in a school, a museum and a care home,

it could definitely work in a pupil referral unit, a gallery or a community centre. It could probably work in a prison, a hospital or even at a political party conference. It isn't hard to imagine how Punchdrunk Enrichment could (profitably) run professional development, training, or away days for leaders and staff of all these organisations, many of whom need new ways to help them imagine themselves in the different political and economic circumstances the future might bring.

## MAIL-ORDER

Punchdrunk Enrichment would like to work in schools beyond London, but as well as the difficulties of



building relationships with schools at distance, there are considerable costs associated with transporting a set, as well as accommodating performers and technicians. The company is currently exploring options for 'posting' a Punchdrunk Enrichment experience to a school. This could mean that *Prospero's Island* arrives at a school in a shipping container in the morning and is taken away in the evening. It could mean that teachers are able to order a 'box' that provides them with everything they need to be able to run a version of *The Lost Lending Library* in a school. Or it could mean that schools are able to subscribe to different installments of stories, or challenges that arrive in the post.

## THE VILLAGE

In spring 2016, Punchdrunk commenced the construction of a village in two warehouses a few minutes walk from Tottenham Hale station. The Village, complete with its own opticians, pub and bric-a-brac shop, is intended to be a place to develop new ideas for the company and extend the forms of Punchdrunk experiences. It is not hard to imagine Punchdrunk Enrichment employing a 'pervasive Petra', corresponding with schools who have recently been visited by *The Lost Lending Library*. Perhaps she would share photos of strange

books, vlog from the Library in the village - perhaps she would help schools to visit her. The Village could also provide an important training facility, both for organisations who are working with Punchdrunk who need to imagine how a project will work and also for teachers who might be interested in learning how to be trained in Punchdrunk's style of site sympathetic practice.

## THE DIGITAL DOOR

Although Punchdrunk Enrichment projects are an escape from modern media, digital devices are likely to become more important to all aspects of their work in the coming years. Digitising parts of projects could make it easier to locate Punchdrunk projects in more distant places. For example, making the different scenes of *Prospero's Island* viewable through a tablet, like *Pokemon Go*, rather than as physical sets located around the school, could reduce the cost of transporting and constructing large props. The addition of a game, or 'digital overlay' to *The Lost Lending Library* could create another way for children to interact with the Library after it has left their school and could provide teachers with further ways to use elements of Punchdrunk Enrichment's practice in their classrooms.

## STORIES INTO MYTHS

But however and wherever Punchdrunk Enrichment finds its way into organisations to enhance experiences, the fundamental challenge now and in the future will be to turn stories into myths - stories that have a life of their own. The longer a story can survive after Punchdrunk has left, the more powerful it becomes for the organisation using it. But all great myths - from crop circles, to the tooth fairy, chemtrails and the Loch Ness Monster - are a collective creation. They cannot be sustained by a single source.

Mindful of this, Punchdrunk Enrichment's approach has been to leave parts of installations behind, to train teachers in the use of immersive techniques and to give participants a suggestion that there might be a way to contact characters through the post or online. Lost Lending Library visitors receive a gold membership card, teachers from Under the Eiderdown continued to supply their pupils with 'Moonjuice', and Greenhive still have the committee's table and chairs to meet around.

But perhaps this will always be hard to sustain as it requires the partner organisation, who previously

have been treated as participant-recipients of an experience, to become its architects. The obvious answer would be to involve teachers in the creation of projects from the start in the design so they feel a greater sense of control and ownership, but this is hard to square with the particularly niche skills, unusual expertise and perspectives that Punchdrunk Enrichment bring. Sometimes, perhaps, other worlds have to come from the outside in.

Although it is hard to involve teachers in the design of a project which has already been designed, perhaps they could be more involved in deciding what the project is actually used for - beyond just inspiration of participants, or new teaching techniques. For better or worse, myths will stay alive if they serve someone's interests. Father Christmas, the tooth fairy and the bogeyman, in their own ways, make being a parent easier. The Lost Lending Library can continue to support teachers in engaging students.

So one way to keep a myth alive, might be for staff to decide on a place, meeting or lesson they want to use the project to change. Maybe this could be explored and researched in a project early on in the process. So, for example, could *The Lost Lending Library* be used

to change the look and appearance of the existing school library? Could it help to remodel storytime or assembly? Could *Under the Eiderdown* change the end of term play? Could *Prospero's Island* be used to make the summer fair raise more money?

# YOU'D BETTER BELIEVE IT

Like so many projects that use the arts in schools, the impact of Punchdrunk Enrichment's work is hard to fully account for. As a review of Punchdrunk's work conducted by researchers at Middlesex University concluded 'it is questionable how far quantitative research is useful to, or indeed proof of, learning in relation to such experiential practice in schools and communities'.<sup>30</sup> The value of Punchdrunk projects has to be believed in, just as schools believe in other value-forming activities such as sports days, end of term plays and school outings.

The evaluation of arts projects in schools often demands immediate results, yet children may not know the significance of an experience or a moment of inspiration for many months or years afterwards. Now in its eighth year, Punchdrunk Enrichment is able to now look at the impact of its work over a long period. Children who first experienced *Under the Eiderdown* are now in sixth-form college. Do

they still remember the bric-à-brac shop? Have they developed an interest in writing and books now? Did one have anything to do with the other? Perhaps now is the time for an 'immersive' research technique.

Trying to understand what Punchdrunk Enrichment 'does'; breaking it down to an aim, a method and a result, outing it as another way of doing teaching, therapy and community building, can be a little clinical. Especially when what motivates Punchdrunk Enrichment's performers, technicians and producers is the desire to make magic, fling people into unforgettable worlds and leave them reeling. That's partly because the enrichment this report has explored is largely about what Punchdrunk does with and for people. But there is another story about how value flows the other way too. Increasingly as a company, it is from the social contexts in which Punchdrunk Enrichment works, in these other worlds and settings, that Punchdrunk is finding new ideas which are used across the company and in public-facing productions. *Greenhive Green* was Punchdrunk's first attempt at creating an episodic immersive narrative. *Prospero's Island* was the first attempt at creating a story within a game. The first experiments involving participants in The Village will be Punchdrunk

Enrichment projects. As immersive theatre continues to look for new ways to keep theatre-going audiences guessing, maybe it will be to Punchdrunk Enrichment, who innovate and respond to participants constantly, that they will turn to for new ideas. And Punchdrunk Enrichment continues to practice what it preaches to its audiences; to go somewhere, discover something unexpected, and return changed.

<sup>30</sup>Machon et al, 25



Photo by Stephen Dobbie



Photo by Stephen Dobbie



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# DOORWAYS

## A review of Punchdrunk Enrichment projects 2013 - 2016

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EVER.”**

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