

# Embracing Arts - Access Report for Chrimblesense 2024

## Overview:

Throughout the Chrimblesense 2024 Christmas Tour, I was able to assess the effectiveness of our approach to access within our performances. This included how we both prepared audience members for our arrival and how it was received.

This report summarises some key aspects of our access as well as some ideas/ recommendations for future touring.

## What went well:

The show continues to excel in its ability to be an accessible, inclusive experience for audience members. The tour thrived as it was child led/ sensory led with access embedded in all parts of delivery from pre-arrival documents to show delivery. The access packs, cosy corner, embedded makaton and freeplay continue to highlight the company's commitment to access. Adding to this list, other things that worked particularly well include:

### **Training**

The 3 week rehearsal period meant that there was ample time to give training in EDI, understanding hospice settings and sensory engagement techniques. There was also the opportunity to test out creative ideas throughout rehearsals in the partnered school. Not only did it ensure the show was made with the input of our audience, it gave performers the chance to gain confidence in these settings.

### **Introduction video**

We often arrived at schools and students recognised from the access packs and from the video. More than once, students commented that we were "the people on the TV"

### **Sensory Activity**

Multiple groups arrived having created baubles to hang on the Christmas tree. It was great to see that staff had engaged with the materials sent before the project.

### **Live music**

The introduction of live music elevated the toy section. It offered an exciting new type of engagement where participants could explore the instruments.

## **Flexibility in Script**

Actors felt so confident with script/ structure that they were able to pick and choose the versions they would do depending on the audience. For example, some sessions with children with ASD who were sensory seekers, we explored not using as much text but going from sensory moment to sensory moment.

## **Access issues we came across:**

### **Audience size**

With the reduced audience size the quality of engagement improved massively. However, some schools still snuck in children/ went over our recommended audience size. Moving forward, it might be worth looking at how we want to approach this (both for the actors on the day setting boundaries, checking numbers in pre-arrival calls etc) Embracing Arts already puts a considerable amount of work into this pre-arrival anyway, but we could explore different methods to see if that makes a difference.

### **Rooms with no lighting control**

Multiple schools put us in rooms with no blinds or dimmable lights. There was always a creative solution, but a note to add this requirement to the "letter for teachers" document.

## **Additional thoughts**

### **Rehearsal Room Access Support Worker**

To support artists, having a rehearsal room access support worker that is available to use by anyone in the company might be something to try, with the particular aim of helping artists who may not be aware that this is something that could be useful to them. If they are named "rehearsal room assistant" or "company support worker" and the job description indicates that if they are not needed for any artists, they will help with general rehearsal room things (note taking, assisting the stage manager, producer)

### **Music soundtrack in advance of show**

Jill Briggs has an excellent article about the use of repetition with audiences. With this in mind, could we pre-record songs to send with the resource pack - a "Chrimblesense Album". During our visits to schools, there was lots of Christmas music played on youtube for students. I wondered if having our songs in advance could be a fun and useful addition to preparing our audiences.

### **Sensory vs Narrative**

It could be fun to further explore the two versions of the show so we have a linguistic narrative driven one, and a sensory driven version depending on the audience we have and actors are ready to use both.

### **Smaller Audience Sizes**

We know engagement improves with smaller audience sizes, and respect that there is a balance needed between low numbers and ensuring we can reach as many of the children as possible. I wonder if there is room to reduce the number again. Food for thought, but 30 is definitely workable.

### **Sensory Storyboard**

Following the inspiration from Bamboozle, could we incorporate into a designer's budget a sensory story board that contains all the elements of the show on one touch board.

### **Conclusion**

The show was a huge success, and many families, teachers and staff shared that it was the most inclusive performance they had seen by a company. Partners continue to share that out of all the visiting companies they have, Christmas for Kids gets it right and understands these settings best.