**WW1 Presentation – 10 November**

**Introduction**

* **My name is Carrie Bird - Artistic Director of Flying High Expressive Arts CIC – provides workshops / training for young people in dance, drama, musical theatre and singing from ages 4 – 19.**
* **This is Rachel Bird, my daughter who is a professional actor but works for the company when not performing**
* **Beginning of 2018 - applied for Heritage Lottery funding under a grant scheme called ‘First World War: then and now’ - and were awarded £10,000 to deliver our project in the local community to explore, conserve and share the heritage of the First World War.**
* **Partners are Gedling Borough Council and Inspire Youth Arts**
* **Started in July 2018 – completed by 11 November 2018**

**Letters**

* **The catalyst for the project has been a set of letters belonging to my grandmother, Lucy Sproston which were written to her from six men involved in the war – including her brother – killed on 29 July 1918 & her fiancé – killed on 12 October 1918 + grandfathers’ letters.**
* **The letters were found by her daughters (my mother & aunt) in a shoe box in a wardrobe after her death and typed up for the family to read.**

**Project strands**

* **We created 4 strands to the project in addition to creating a ‘Then and Now’ theme for our annual showcase in July.**
* **Digital resource (which is nearly finished) where all our research, photos, feedback, planning can be viewed and some items downloaded. The address to access this will be** [**www.ww1thenandnow.org**](http://www.ww1thenandnow.org)
* **10 workshops in Gedling Borough schools**
  + **Drama role play workshop exploring Trench life and conditions, ranks in the army and going ‘over the top’ into No Man’s Land with Year 2 at Willow Farm Primary School, Gedling, Year 5 at Netherfield Primary School and Year 6 at Westdale Junior School**
  + **Dance with Year 9 & 10 (GCSE students) at Arnold Hill Academy exploring dance movements using the idea of the journeys the letters made to and from the front line – 2 days**
  + **Created a scripted piece using 6 extracts from the real letters acted out and narration to be performed in a school assembly this week at Carlton Junior School with Year 6**
  + **Drama role play workshops exploring the same 6 extracts from the real letters and finding ways to illustrate these with Year 5 at Woodborough Woods School and Ernehale Junior School**
  + **Singing workshops with Year 7 at Colonel Frank Seely Academy – singing WW1 songs – Goodbyee, It’s a long way to Tipperary, Pack up your Troubles, giving background to the songs as well as singing in rounds and harmony.**
  + **Dance workshop – exploring the journeys of letters from the front home and vice versa at Carlton Digby School – students with profound and complex learning difficulties followed by a drama workshop exploring the role of the horses in WW1 – training them up, feeding, ensuring their well-being – 8 million horses died. 2 assistants became the horses!**
* **So many questions and great interest – real details from letters made the difference**
* **Feedback** 
  + **They really loved taking part in the drama and performing this to the rest of the class. The real-life example using letters was really powerful. Thank you very much.**
  + **They loved the role play part of the session. It was wonderful to see our students use their imagination when that is something they struggle with.**
  + **It was a great way to bring it to life! It was wonderful, and the students got more out of it than I expected!**
  + **We will sing the songs at our WW1 celebration event**
* **Letters**

**Sergeant Joseph Higginson**

**Dear Lucy.**

**We have not done much work of any kind this week. Just a little drill with stretchers and lectures and bandaging. Yesterday, we were learning how to ‘collect wounded’ on stretchers under fire. We have to move along in a crouching position and it is no easy matter to carry a patient on a stretcher when in that position.**

**Your good friend, Joe**

**Captain Oliver C H Lampard**

**Dear old Lu.**

**Today I have started being official. I am feeling fagged, for nearly every soldier in the British Army has saluted me at least six times and my arm aches after returning them. When not saluting, I have been supervising sundry squads of conscripts (bless ‘em). I think I’m good at supervising.**

**Your sincere friend, Oliver**

**Second Lieutenant Frederick Alvin Sproston**

**Dear Lu.**

**When I was down at the base, I saw quite a number of Portuguese soldiers, but I can’t say that I am very much impressed by them. Instead of calling them Portuguese, the soldiers call them Pork and Cheese.**

**Fondest love, Yours till Big Ben becomes a wristlet, your brother, Alvin**

**Second Lieutenant Robert Stott**

**My dearest Lu.**

**We are bullied about as if we were dogs by the Sergeant Major and the officers aren’t much better. I’m afraid if I met some of them in civy life, I should forget myself. One does not mind a little bullying but when a fellow who has never been out to the front makes it hot for you, it goes against the grain.**

**With much love to all. Your loving Bob**

**Lieutenant Thomas Cowap**

**Dear Lucy.**

**You may have wondered how I’m getting on – well I’m doing very well now. They sent me over on the 9th. Things shouldn’t be too bad when they have finished me ‘off’. I’ll have some ugly scars and ‘mouse holes’ in my leg – but then I never thought much about looks so I won’t mind. If all the scratches I got were placed end to end, they would measure over four feet and I have already had thirty odd stitches taken out.**

**Love from your cousin, Thomas**

**Flight Lieutenant Leonard Hall**

**Dear Lucy.**

**At this aerodrome the new pilots have always learnt on DH6s and then gone on to the FE2b which is used for bombing at night but at present the first section is full up and so they have to put about a dozen of us straight on the FEs which is rather unfortunate as they are such heavy buses (ton & half) and the controls are rather heavy.**

**Regards to all, Len**

* **Summer Course**
  + **Entitled – ‘Now & Then’ – aim to focus on the 100 years after 1918**
  + **31 young people aged 7 – 13 – 2 groups 7-11 & 11-13 including young people with additional needs**
  + **3 days 10 – 3 at Pond Hills Lane Community Centre - Dance workshops & Drama workshops**
  + **Produced** 
    - **6 pieces of drama – using extracts from the letters, an extract from ‘Oh What a Lovely War’, information & pictures of evacuees during WW2 & letters written today**
    - **4 dances – depicting the surplus women – dancing without a partner, Boogie, Woogie Bugle Boy – Andrews Sisters WW2, rationing – Please leave my butter alone – Elsie Carlisle – ending with the teenage rebellion & Jailhouse Rock.**
    - **The pieces were put together in chronological order with narration to link them and the whole group ended singing ‘Somewhere over the Rainbow’**
  + **Friday 31 August – 1.30 – tech 2.00 – 5.00 – performance at 7.00 in front of family, friends and other interested people – 60 – 80 watching.**
* **Feedback** 
  + **We were really moved by the simplicity of the performance last Friday, particularly as it was so poignant and the children were so engaged and enthusiastic.**
  + **The dancing and story-telling were so well delivered and smiling faces said it all.**
  + **Can I sign my daughter up for the next one now please??!! She had such a great time and I thought the final performance was breathtaking at times. There was a tear in my eye on more than one occasion.**
  + **The children had covered such a lot in only a week and they were dealing with some important historical issues. I’m sure their understanding of life before technology and the hardships of post war life has been made very real to them. Thanks for creating such a constructive and fun course.**
* **Dear Lucy… a play with songs and movement based on the true story of Lucy Sproston who lost her brother and fiancé a few weeks before the end of WW1. A family affair!**
  + **Written and directed by Carrie Bird (Granddaughter)**
  + **Cast of 5 professional performers - including Rachel & Tam (Great Granddaughters)**
  + **Songs & Music written by Tash (Great Granddaughter)**
  + **The Play begins with excerpts of letters written to Lucy by 3 of the men and depicts the death of her brother and fiancé, using the real telegrams.**
  + **The story follows Lucy’s life after 1918, through the post war period as Lucy tries to come to terms with her losses.**
  + **Her friends and relatives slowly rebuild their lives, marrying new sweethearts, moving on, whilst Lucy continues to deal with death – in this case of her father in 1920.**
  + **Throughout this time, Lucy is pursued by Len (my eventual grandfather & one of the six letter writers) but she is reluctant to marry and he has to wait until 1927 - 9 years after the end of the war.**
* **The play was previewed in Nottingham on July 29 – the 100th year anniversary of Alvin Sproston’s (my grandmother’s brother) death – killed in action, performed 8 times at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in August, at the Bonington Theatre after the Summer Course on 31 August & at 3 Gedling Homes – Moreland Court, St Andrews House and Foxhill Court.**
* **Feedback & reviews**
  + **The tenants really enjoyed the performance and it gave them plenty to talk about and one of our tenants brought in her Grandfathers medals which was really interesting.**
  + **The play was deeply moving; triggering so many emotions, so many questions and for me personally many questions that I would have liked to have asked my parents when they were alive but I never thought to ask.**
  + **Wonderful show, which somehow finds a way of dramatizing life ending and life carrying on, during and after World War I, with four versatile actors, very few props and an excellent script. Movingly, when the war ends, there is no fist pumping in victory, only a stunned disbelief that it's finally all over:**
* **We sometimes forget that the end of the war was not always jubilant and was traumatic for so many for so long after the end nn. The silence replaced the sound of shells and gunfire. This is a voice over from the play.**
* **Rachel is going to sing the final song from the play as Lucy deciding to put the past behind her and move on with her life.**