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**ASSISTANT**

**PRODUCER INTERN**

**JUNE – AUG 2020**

Hello, I'm Katie and I partook in a Covid-19 SME Internship from June to August 2020 with the Community Arts and Theatre company Brave Bold Drama based in Hartcliffe and Withywood, (though I was working remotely). I was the 'Assistant Producer Intern' and I was primarily working on the Bristol and Bath Creative R+D 'Expanded Performance' Research project, of which Brave Bold Drama was an industry partner.

Our research question was 'Does the use of technology in extra-curricular performing arts offers mean that 11-16-year olds (from lower socio-economic backgrounds) are more likely to engage?'. I was responsible for identifying and researching previous examples of 'best practice' when using performance and technology to engage our target demographic.

I also read and collated lots of research on this topic for use in the final research report. I can honestly say I have learned so much from this experience! It has given me an insight into the Arts industry and how it works: from the importance of freelancers, to how to apply for funding. I have also learned about Bristol's local arts scene and I have spoken to so many interesting people from this area who are working on everything from very local, targeted community engagement, to pioneering the latest immersive Virtual Reality experiences.

Most importantly, this experience has opened my eyes to the geographic and economic disparity in arts and cultural provision for children and young people. My experience has made me acknowledge my own privilege in terms of having had access to a quality arts education through my school, which was a good state school, and external youth theatres (which I was fortunate to be able to afford).

With the current underfunding of the Arts in education and communities, families without the money to spend on extracurricular activities, especially in areas of low cultural engagement, don't have the same opportunities. Therefore, their children miss out on the proven benefits of creative engagement. One purpose of the Covid-19 SME internship scheme was to do work that 'contributed to the COVID-19 effort'.

What has become absolutely clear to me is that Covid-19, contrary to the well-meaning, but completely ill-informed, assertions at the start of the pandemic that the virus is a 'great leveller', has, and will continue to, absolutely devastate people in deprived circumstances in this country.

Contrary to bigger Arts organisations who were able to put their salaried staff on furlough and cease activities, Brave Bold Drama is one example of a tiny community-focussed company who have continued to work throughout the pandemic. They have continually adapted to the changing lockdown measures to continue to respond to the needs of people they work with, such as providing lockdown activity packs and socially-distant outdoor play sessions. During this time, the young person who has been locked-down in the tower block in Hartcliffe needs engaging, entertaining, challenging and distracting more than ever.

By taking on some of the reading and researching tasks, I like to think that I have given Gill and Paul some more time and headspace to focus on going out into the community, and making lockdown a little bit brighter for the people who have, and will continue to, suffer its consequences most painfully. Working so closely with these two has been so inspiring! I feel that working with such a small company allows an intern to feel involved and that their work really matters. The last three months have been so rewarding and I would like to thank Gill and Paul for their time, it has been amazing to be so involved.