

Adding Value -

Almeida Theatre & Tomorrow's Warriors

Silver & Gold was a nine-month action research programme that supported six cultural organisations in London to explore new models for delivering Arts Award. The programme was designed, facilitated and funded by A New Direction. This document is one of five that share the learning from the programme. The full set can be found on the AND website <http://www.anewdirection.org.uk/>

Introduction to the organisations

Almeida Theatre

'A small room with an international reputation, we make bold new work that asks big questions: of plays, of theatre and how we live.'

The Almeida is a producing theatre in Islington with a 325-seat auditorium, cafe and bar.

Project Coordinator: Boris Witzenfeld, Community and Participation Manager

Prior Experience: Adviser trained at Bronze and Silver but not delivered the Award

Awards: 8 Silver

Participants: Existing members of Young People's Creative Board
12 young people aged 15-25 years

Aim: To add value and rigour to existing programmes for young people.



Model for Silver & Gold:

The Young Person's Creative Board (YPCB) meet as a group once a fortnight across a year. Young people elect to join one of six teams that shadow the theatre's departments e.g. artistic leadership, marketing and events. As well as the Board meetings, each team is mentored by the relevant theatre department to undertake specific tasks. The YPCB attend and review professional productions, organise events for other Young Friends, produce a quarterly newsletter and Facebook updates for Young Friends and assist on workshops for younger children. Arts Award was integrated into this ongoing programme of work and Board members also devised and staged two productions in response to the main programme.



Tomorrow's Warriors

'We champion, develop and promote the most diverse collective of gifted and talented jazz musicians in the UK.'

Tomorrow's Warriors (TW) delivers a programme comprising learning and participation, artist development and professional performances. The organisation has a special, though not exclusive, focus on young musicians from the African diaspora and girls aged 11-25. The organisation is based in Harrow but is a weekend resident at Southbank Centre in central London.

Project Coordinator: James Hill, Learning and Participation Coordinator

Prior Experience: Former staff member delivered Bronze with six Awards achieved in April 2013

Awards: 1 Bronze, 7 Silver

Participants: Existing musicians that show commitment to weekend workshops and bands rehearsals at Southbank Centre.

Aim: To add value to an established and successful programme.

Model for Silver & Gold:

Each weekend, Tomorrow's Warriors run a range of free, open access workshops for varying ages of young musicians that focus on jazz technique and repertoire. As they progress, young people are invited to join a range of bands that also rehearse at the Southbank Centre. In addition, young people have the opportunity to perform and attend performances and master classes with leading jazz artists.

Six young musicians achieved Bronze Arts Award in 2013 and were keen to progress to Silver. From this initial experience, Tomorrow's Warriors recognised that *'we're doing the necessary work all the time and Arts Award seems a perfect vehicle for validation'*. Tomorrow's Warriors determined to use the programme to offer Silver Arts Award for the first time and also to offer Gold to selected musicians. James Hill ran dedicated Arts Award sessions to complement regular music workshops.

What was new?

For the Almeida, it was new to *'deliver it at all!'* Tomorrow's Warriors was building on an experience of Bronze but with a new member of staff acting as the adviser. Both organisations used Arts Award to add value to established and successful youth programmes. Project coordinators were convinced that criteria could be met through existing activity: members of Almeida's Young Person's Creative Board are tasked with seeing and reviewing shows, for example, and organising events; musicians at Tomorrow's Warriors are frequently set challenges as they compose, rehearse and perfect their musicianship. As James Hill said, *'A lot of activities can contribute, it's therefore about getting young people to appreciate what they're doing and put this into the structure.'*

James Hill also realised that Arts Award provided a structure and impetus for young people to reflect on and value the range of (free) opportunities available to them. They regularly perform at the Southbank Centre for example and work with a wide range of high profile musicians who are happy to share their expertise and talk about their careers.

What worked well

Tomorrow's Warriors encouraged young people to use a blog portfolio. This online format proved particularly successful for music as it allowed young people to embed audio and film of performances and rehearsals.

Having now run Bronze, Silver and Gold, TW are *'More aware of the level of commitment and thought needed for each level. We don't need separate programmes for each level but can support young people at the level that suits their capabilities.'*

Both organisations stressed the particular value of the reflective nature of Arts Award. The Almeida's project coordinator commented,

'The Arts Challenge is an excellent reflective exercise for young people to think about who they are as an artist and where they want to go with their practice.'

Meeting challenges

The common challenges experienced by *Silver & Gold* partners are outlined in the summary document. Almeida and TW encountered other challenges, however, linked to their developing understanding of the Arts Award structure and criteria. These are summarised below.

Articulating and defining an arts challenge

At Tomorrow's Warriors, James Hill assumed young people would identify their Arts Challenge from existing music sessions; in reality, it was not this simple. Some challenges, such as learning to sight read, were relatively easy to plan, monitor and document. Others were less easy to articulate as a challenge: one young man, for example, proposed to listen to jazz records to develop his own practice. Conversations with TW music leaders helped him think clearly about his challenge of 'active listening', the reasons for doing it, the elements components involved and the practical outcomes (improved ensemble playing as well as individual technique).

Finding the right level

Some of the younger participants at TW (14 year olds) found the reflection and planning required for Silver challenging. Of the three musicians who started work on Gold, two struggled with the workload. TW took a flexible and responsive approach and moved individuals between levels if necessary so that their efforts were still rewarded. (One Silver candidate achieved a Bronze and three Gold candidates moved to Silver).

Individual credit for collaborative enterprise

The YPCB at Almeida, promotes team work and group endeavour. Boris Witzendorf was concerned that young people would find it hard to identify their individual role and achievements within group work and he was uncertain how young people could best document their individual journey. Would he have to change the existing programme to give each young person the opportunity to lead a project? Solutions were offered by other *Silver & Gold* network partners who had run successful Silver Arts Award projects based on group work. Young people need to:

- identify their own personal challenge within a group project
- demonstrate their own area of responsibility within a group project used for Arts Leadership
- write in the first person singular ('I' not 'we')
- identify the impact of the experience on them as artists and leaders.

Organisational outcomes

'The way young people have embraced it! They've collaboratively devised and written a show as a group.'

'We've kept young people's engagement up (given that Arts Award is extra work for them and they already devote so much time to their music).'

'We have developed our offer - we've achieved more Awards and at higher levels.'

Silver & Gold network partners devised individual evaluation frameworks at the outset of the programme. Alongside delivering successful Arts Award projects (in which young people met their objectives and target numbers of Awards were achieved), objectives and success criteria set out how the organisations hoped to develop with the ultimate aim of embedding and sustaining Arts Award. Key organisational outcomes are listed below.

Silver & Gold gave both organisations the opportunity to witness the benefits of Arts Award, understand the requirements and assess the Award's applicability to various aspects of their work with young people. (See section below - *Embedding Arts Award*)

At TW, a key objective to embed Arts Award was for music leaders across the Learning Faculty to increase their understanding of the Award. Arts Award became an agenda item at quarterly faculty meetings and James Hill made a presentation about the components of the Award. The Arts Award participants were engaged in a range of groups at TW. Relevant music leaders were briefed to act as external advisers, offering their professional support and feedback on young people's ideas.

'The Music Leader on our Junior Sessions really embraced Arts Award. The majority of participants were working with him and he's always so methodical in his approach, he was an excellent support.'

Andy Chapman, Head of Learning Faculty, TW

Silver & Gold resulted in professional development for the project coordinators. James Hill and Boris Witzenfeld were first time Arts Award advisers and reported increased confidence in delivering the Award. Work undertaken to map programme activity against Arts Award units, establish a timeline and understand how to customise the Award to unique features of the organisation will aid the sustainability moving forward.

These organisations aimed to bring greater structure and rigour to specific projects through Arts Award. This aim was achieved and project coordinators noted how certain practices would be adopted more widely. James Hill commented on the introduction of '*critical debate and language*' for example and Boris Witzenfeld concurred,

'As a member of the Board, you have to see shows (at Almeida and elsewhere) and review them. Arts Award has brought a rigour to this. The way that we talk about shows has evolved; an interrogation of why ... is it good or bad? I'd keep this, with or without Arts Award.'

Embedding Arts Award

Through *Silver & Gold*, AND aimed to embed sustainable delivery of Silver and Gold Arts Award in the core business of the participating organisations. This section examines the steps taken by the Almeida and Tomorrow's Warriors to embed Arts Award and the extent to which this aim has been achieved.

Both organisations have put themselves on the Arts Award map: the Almeida is now an Arts Award Centre (TW was already registered) and both have signed up as Arts Award Supporters. James Hill explained that as a Supporter, TW could offer young people the opportunity to meet and interview jazz musicians or attend one-off workshops. *'It's about putting people in touch, making new connections, potentially, attracting new participants.'* Interestingly, at the Almeida, two members of the YPCB were already registered for Arts Award with their schools. They opted to use their work at the theatre for their Award, whilst the responsibility for accreditation remained with the school. For *Silver & Gold* therefore, Almeida acted as the Arts Award Centre for the majority of young people and a Supporter for two.

Both organisations intend to continue offering Arts Award with the groups trialled through *Silver & Gold* and also to extend the offer to additional groups. Tomorrow's Warriors, for example, are launching a new Junior Band and plan to integrate Bronze Award into the programme. It will be a compulsory part of the programme with sessions to support completion of the Award run together with music sessions. Tomorrow's Warriors has an ethos of inclusion and informality but also of self development which demands dedication and deliberation. TW see these as complementary rather than competing agendas and *Silver & Gold* allowed the organisation to consider how Arts Award could be assimilated into this core practice. The organisation has concluded that Arts Award offers a flexible, progressive pathway for young people that supports personal and musical development.

Both organisations talked about increasing their capacity to support Arts Award. The Almeida has trained two additional advisers (meaning that three of the five staff in the department are now trained) and TW is considering training other workshop and band leaders, giving James a mentoring role for these new advisers.

Conclusion

The Almeida and Tomorrow's Warriors' premise that Arts Award can add value by accrediting existing activity was proved to be true. Additional work was required to document activity and learning but both organisations believed the reflective nature of this work was of great benefit to the participating young people. Key learning for TW concerned the flexible and progressive nature of Arts Award and an understanding of how Silver and Gold can support young people's ongoing musical and personal development.

At the Almeida, Samantha Lane, Director of Almeida Projects, sees the potential for Arts Award to accredit young people's work engaged in other long-term projects at the theatre. She perceived that Silver and Gold are of particular worth to young people preparing to apply to college or university, describing them as *'Qualifications that can set you apart from your peers'*. She concluded, *'We would expect to triple the number of young people attaining Arts Award next year so that's a real achievement.'*