



## **Summer season report to Teignmouth Town Council, 2022**



This was the 4<sup>th</sup> year that Promenade Promotions (Prom-Prom) Limited had provided entertainment on Teignmouth promenade.

After an extremely successful, post-Covid season in 2021, Prom-Prom submitted a series of proposals to Teignmouth Council for the summer season of 2022 and at the Teignmouth Town Council meeting in November, a motion was passed to support 3 days of performance work by 3 performers for 6 consecutive weeks during the summer (2 days on the promenade and 1 day in the Triangle each week); in addition, the vote supported hiring the galleon, plus a festival of Punch & Judy puppetry in September. The costs were clearly set-out for this programme of work and a motion passed to support the work at this rate for the following three years.

Unfortunately, despite being passed by vote at the meeting and announced on social media, in January 2022 the council changed the agreement and reduced

the programme to just 2 performers, for 2 days a week for only 4 weeks of the summer – a reduction of more than 60%! This clearly impacted substantially on what we were able to deliver. Nevertheless, with some very hard fund-raising through local trusts and foundations, plus a small amount of local commercial sponsorship and the support of Devon County Council, we were able to use the galleon on 6 days during the summer and to bring the requisite 3<sup>rd</sup> person (myself) for most of those 6 dates. I also managed to raise the funds to support 2 local trainees aged 17 & 23, who performed in Teignmouth alongside the others on 6 occasions. It should be noted at this point, that the extra work involved in having to raise the money elsewhere has not been recouped and I only knew that I could bring the whole package just a week before the season – hardly conducive to a sense of security or confidence. Whilst I have been extremely grateful for the support of Teignmouth Town Council this year, it is not realistic for us to work under similar constraints in 2023, so I would urge the councillors to make confirmed decisions in Autumn this year for the following 2-3 years, if they wish Prom-Prom to remain in residence in the town.

## Seafront activities 2022



The company brought a range of self-contained outdoor performance to perform for the passing crowds who were at Teignmouth over the summer. We used the usual location for shows next to the lighthouse and also animated the empty concave area opposite the Beachcomber (where TAAG were based



throughout the summer) with seaside games and peepboards each day. One of the peepboards had been donated to us from a local couple who had seen us work there last season and who had been keeping the boards in their flat overlooking the playpark for the previous 40 years!



*The donors of the peepboard enjoying it back on the promenade, where it started 60 years ago!*

Prom-Prom managed the spaces – decorating them with banners, jolly flags and bunting, as well as benches and mats for seating. The programmed work was all family-friendly, accessible, interactive acts. A range of performers presented work non-stop from 11-4.30 each day, including Punch & Judy, flea circus, storytelling, music, puppetry, seaside games, clowning, stilt-walking, juggling, and bubble-blowing.





*Professor Gayton' Punch & Judy*



*Uncle Tacko's Flea Circus*



*The trainees – 'Major Lavish' & 'Nomin' performing*





*The games team (including 2 extra local youngsters who volunteered to join us during the season!)*



*The seaside peep-board donated to us by a local couple*

Teignbridge District Council generously supported us with permissions to use the space and also 2 parking spaces on the Upper Den, as required. The support of the staff on site was terrific – they were positive and pro-active at all times and a real bonus for us.

In addition to the performances and seaside games, we redeveloped the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grand Pier ‘sentry box’ as a peepshow, with pictures of old Teignmouth seafront – we collaborated with Teignbridge Heritage Museum to create a permanent, additional attraction to the infrastructure of the promenade. As a result, we were once again featured on BBC’s Spotlight programme and the



venue was the backdrop for a 5-minute article that went out on prime-time television: <https://youtu.be/79oQXLhASWk>.



*The Grand Pier 'Peep-box'*

## **Impacts**

We were enthusiastically received by tourists, residents and traders alike. Many came up to us after the performances and said that we had made their trip to the Teignmouth more enjoyable. Some had clearly travelled specifically for the free entertainment and watched every show during the day, sometimes on consecutive weeks - some even said that they came to Teignmouth only because we were performing there!

The extremely hot weather impacted on many resorts in south Devon and most locations found that numbers along the promenades were rather less than usual because there was not shade from the burning heat. Nevertheless, our shows were generally well-attended and we did not lose any days to rain this summer.



We made minimal impact upon the resources of the space – providing the decoration, the seating, the programming & scheduling, in-house.

We reached very large numbers of people visiting Teignmouth and added to the experience of the area as an attraction. On each of the commissioned 8 days, we performed 4-5 times per day to audiences that averaged 150 per show (i.e. approximately 5,000 people); in addition, we performed to twice that number as we performed walkabouts along the promenade with the galleon, puppets and bubbles. As a result, we reached approximately 15,000 people during our programme of work in Teignmouth.

We also reached very large numbers on social and broadcast media.

We provided employment opportunities for local acts and animated the space effectively once again, becoming a feature of Teignmouth's summer season.



## **'The Sunshine Follies' training programme 2022**

(supported by the Helen Foundation & Exeter Community Arts Grants)



***Nomin, Sergeant Spike & Major Lavish rehearsing at Theatre Alibi's Emmanuel Hall***

2 young practitioners were trained for 2 weeks and then employed, alongside their trainers, as professional performers throughout the summer holiday period at a variety of south Devon locations. An open call went-out to local, emerging artists in June 2022 and we received a number of written applications. We invited 6 of these to attend an audition workshop in the studios of the University of Exeter. From these applicants, we selected our 2 trainees, who both happened to be base in Dawlish. They trained with Prom-Prom for 10 days over the course of July, working with experienced, local, professional practitioners to learn skills in street arts and seaside performance. In addition, they received self-employment training from staff members of Theatre Alibi - including, contracting, invoicing, risk assessment, health & safety and self-promotion. The training took place in 3 different locations in Exeter – key cultural institutions who supported the project through their in-kind contribution of rehearsal space. The trainees received their training at the University of Exeter's drama studios, Exeter College's Centre for Creative Industries and Theatre Alibi's Emmanuel Hall. This gave the trainees experience of significant cultural facilities in the city.





Following their training, each of the trainees was provided with 10 days of professional employment to perform alongside their tutors at different locations in South Devon - Teignmouth Promenade, Exeter Quayside, Dawlish Lawn, Torquay Banjo area, Exeter Cathedral Green. They performed routines of head-turning, escapology, blade box, puppets, stilt-walking, seaside games, as well as barking crowds and interacting. They were interviewed by local and regional press and media They had to load and unload the van, as well as invoice for their work. Throughout, they each kept a blog of their activities. It was exhausting, but I believe transformative to their practice! They are now equipped to be able to develop freelance careers in the arts and both of the trainees have subsequently indicated that their training has been inspirational to their future careers.



The training programme has been nominated for an 'Impact Award' by the University of Exeter and the winners will be announced at a gala dinner in October (Councillors Phipps and Cox have been invited to this ceremony, along with Roger Kirk of the Helen Foundation and myself). We very much hope that Teignmouth will remain one of the key partners of this training programme into the future and the financial support of the council in matched funds remains an integral part of the structure of this programme. Without committed support being in place by mid-November, the training will not be able to happen in Teignmouth in 2023.

Here is a link to a short evaluation film about the training programme (some of which is set in Teignmouth): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJxhu2ptjYQ>

## **Conclusions**

- The regular programming of activities in Teignmouth during each week of the summer holidays, with family-friendly, variety-based shows, works extremely well and has built a momentum for audiences and traders alike. It has attracted enormous support from the public and great interest from the media.
- We seem to have found an efficient and light-footed model of working which can be repeated relatively easily throughout the season and without substantial cost.
- It is essential for there to be enough financial support to enable a minimum of 3 professional performers and for this funding to be in place early enough to secure the commitment from the company and provide the necessary matched funding for us to lever other funding from alternative sources. (The reality is that we have already been approached by Exeter, Dawlish and Torquay to consider extending what we might do for them in the future – it would also be true to say that we could not continue in Teignmouth on the current financial basis).
- We would be keen to repeat the model next year and would welcome the chance to extend the number of days in Teignmouth, as had originally been agreed for the 2022 summer.
- It would be good to consider ways in which we might develop other strands of the work, such as the permanent regeneration of physical infrastructure on the promenade, (as we have done over the past 2



years with the sentry boxes,) through creative practice and also how we might permeate into the town with regular activities in the Triangle and/or a suitable seasonal festival such as Punch & Judy, or storytelling.

- The training programme fits very neatly into this model and we hope to continue this in the future, but this requires committed funding, which we can then use to match other sums.
- 2022 was another highly successful season in Teignmouth and I hope that we shall be able to build upon it for the future.



*The team, 2022*

**NB The accompanying financial proposals for 2023 show the costs for different models of work that Prom-Prom could provide next summer: these would need to be agreed by Teignmouth Council by mid-November if the summer schedule of work is to go ahead as planned.**

Tony Lidington  
Artistic Director  
Promenade Promotions (Prom-Prom) Limited  
8<sup>th</sup> October 2022