

Annual Report 2018



Introduction

The core mission of London Children's Ballet (LCB) is to inspire and educate through dance. We do this by commissioning new narrative ballets that are performed typically in a major London theatre each year by a company of talented young dancers, and by introducing new audiences to ballet through our outreach work. Our popular productions are the primary way that LCB develops young dancers as well as up-and-coming choreographers, composers and designers. Our subsequent outreach work enables us to engage with audiences who would never usually consider attending a ballet or who are physically unable to do so.

The 2018 production of *The Canterville Ghost* was a tremendous success. Following competitive auditions 56 young dancers were selected to be part of LCB's main company, and a further 48 children were invited to join LCB's touring companies. *The Canterville Ghost* was performed to full houses over eight performances at The Peacock Theatre from 19-22 April. Nearly 2000 tickets were offered to charities and schools for only £1 each. Touring companies brought an abridged version of this ballet to over 2,000 people in the community in June and September.

THE PRODUCTION

LCB aims to give every child the chance to perform, especially to those who may not be able to afford such opportunities. This year, 87% of the children in the company said they would not have been able to afford the LCB experience were it not free of charge.

The 2018 production of *The Canterville Ghost* was a revival of the 2005 production choreographed by late David Fielding and composed by Artem Vassiliev. LCB Tour Director, Victoria Collinson, took on the role of revival choreographer. She was joined by former Royal Ballet Dancer, Sabina Cox, who took on the role of Ballet Mistress. The way in which these two dancers set about choreographing for and training the children made this year particularly special for the young dancers involved. They took a unique approach, treating the children with remarkable compassion and professionalism.

The lighting designs were by Arnim Friess, revived sets by Charlie Camm from original designs by Andrea Harper and costumes designed by Kate Ford.

Over 600 children aged between 9 and 15 auditioned for the 56 places in the 2018 Company. The six-month audition-to-performance experience is free meaning the children in the Company come from a wide range of backgrounds. Rehearsals ran on Sundays from January through April, including full weeks of rehearsals over school holidays during that time.

There were eight performances in the West End from 19th – 22nd April including a fundraising Premiere on the Thursday night. Two matinee performances were reserved for primary school children coming from areas of social deprivation and for charities for the elderly and for children.

OUTREACH

LCB Touring Companies

LCB tours an abridged version of its ballets to community venues with the aim of introducing ballet to new audiences and developing its social impact. After the performances of *The Canterville Ghost* at the Peacock Theatre concluded, the ballet was suitably adapted for touring to small community spaces. Throughout the year, LCB sent four small touring companies to 40 venues, bringing the music, choreography and stunning costumes to some of London's most isolated groups who cannot access the theatre. Among the venues that receive LCB tours in 2018 were residential care homes, hospices and schools for children with special needs. For each tour

performance, dancers performed in full costumes from the Peacock production with the dancers each performing up to three different roles to tell the story.

LCB Touring Companies provides a way to extend the LCB experience to additional children who came close but did not quite make it into the main performance company. These children are given a week of intensive ballet tuition and rehearsal time, with one-to-one attention that often results in the children being selected for the main company the following year. A total of 48 dancers were members of the touring company in 2018.

The tour provides isolated elderly people in residential homes a rare opportunity to see young children perform in a vibrant display of dance with stunning costumes to beautifully played music, written especially to accompany the ballet. After performing, the dancers mingle with the residents to talk about the performance and give them a chance to admire the costumes close-up. For children in special educational needs schools the tour offers a rare chance to see their peers performing. Ballet is particularly fascinating to children who have difficulty with verbal communication and they can enjoy the story unfolding by way of dance, mime, music and costume. After the performance the children are encouraged to learn mime, try ballet movements, try the costumes and interact with the LCB dancers.

LCB Touring Company completed four tours in 2018: two in June and two in September, bringing a stunning short version of *The Canterville Ghost* to a combined audience of over 2,000 people at 40 venues across Greater London.

Ballet for £1 Programme

To fulfil its mission to bring ballet to new audiences, the charity offers 25 percent of its tickets to disadvantaged primary schools (those based in areas of social deprivation, schools that have a broad ethnic mix, a high level of children on free school meals and very little access to the arts) for just £1 a ticket. We also identify charities working with some of the most isolated people in London – the elderly, sick and disabled. These schools and charities are invited to bring their beneficiaries to LCB's performances, providing access to live theatre to people who would not usually be able to attend.

Following the production, LCB offers free post-production workshops to all primary schools who attend our Ballet for £1 matinees, giving children the opportunity to try dance themselves. Children are led through various movement and performance exercises, learn more about dance, listen to the classical music and try on costumes. Through a DVD featuring children in the LCB company, primary school children learn that dancers are 'just like them,' breaking down pre-conceived ideas about ballet. Nearly all schools report that students want to do more ballet after they have completed a half day workshop with LCB. Specifically, many teachers note a surprising level of engagement from boys who initially rejected the idea of ballet, and from children who are usually disruptive or disengaged in class.

This year, LCB offered almost 2,000 tickets prices at £1 to 21 schools and 35 charities for two matinee performances of *The Canterville Ghost* on 19th and 20th April. For 76% of the children attending from schools, *The Canterville Ghost* was their first experience of ballet and 50% had never experienced any kind of theatre before. 79% of all children attending the performance expressed great enjoyment of the ballet. Of the charity groups attending, 92% said they enjoyed the ballet greatly.



TRAINING

Audition Masterclass

The masterclasses, led by Royal Ballet dancers Laura McCulloch and Anna Rose O'Sullivan, took place in March 2018 at Studio Wayne MacGregor. Children who were unsuccessful at auditions were invited to attend an LCB Masterclass, which focussed on audition and performance technique, helping children to have confidence in presentation and performance. This is a key skill for any dancer, and helps the children feel more confident for future ballet exams, auditions and performances.

Summer School

LCB ran a two-week summer school for girls in July and August 2018. The first week was for 9-12 year olds and the second for 12-16 year olds. 85 children took part and 4 children received full grants. The week included a variety of classes including a daily ballet class, LCB repertoire, jazz and contemporary. Students also benefited from workshops in musical theatre, mime and stage make up as well as performances from professional ballet and contemporary dancers. Of the children who attended, 94% said that they now felt more confident to audition and 79% said they felt more confident about their performance skills.

Ballet for Boys

Narrative ballets need boys, but boys often drop out because they find themselves alone in a room full of girls and think 'maybe not'. Ballet schools have often told us that they struggle to attract or retain boys amongst so many girls and parents of boys wishing to dance struggle to find male orientated environments. As a result, LCB developed its Ballet for Boys programme – a seven-week course for boys only and taught each year by a professional male ballet dancer.

Erico Montes, First Artist with The Royal Ballet, and choreographer of LCBs *The Secret Garden* and *Nanny McPhee* led this year's series of boys-only ballet classes. The course ran from February to May. 33 boys took part and four children received grants.

LCB Juniors and Little LCB

This year LCB decided to trial running for-profit teaching programmes outside of the summer school weeks, targeting children under the traditional LCB age range. Three programmes were run over the course of the year, each received positive feedback from all attendees. LCB Juniors, for children aged 7-11, ran during half term from 12th-16th February. 27 children took part and two received grants. The week-long programme was led by Colleen O'Keefe and Amy Hollins. A second programme *Little LCB* for ages 4-8 was run in the May half term from 29th May to 1st June. 20 children attended this course which was led by Colleen O'Keefe. Finally, a two day Summer Fun Little LCB for ages 4-8 was run on 23rd and 24th July before the Summer School. This was attended by 14 children and led by Sabina Cox, assisted by Dolly Banks Baddiel. Due to the popularity of these new programmes LCB is already planning a Christmas Masterclass, another February half term programme and Summer Fun.

FUNDRAISING

Thanks to the generosity of many individuals as well as trusts, foundations and companies, this has been a strong year for LCB financially. We are grateful to all who have helped to put the charity on firm footing. In November 2017, a large fundraising event was held at the Banqueting House. The Gala included an auction with over 50 donated lots and raised over £150,000.

A full summary of financial details can be found in LCB's annual accounts, available on the Charity Commission website.

Supporters

LCB would like to thank the following for generously supporting the charity's work this year:

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Sean Wolpert
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And others who wish to remain anonymous

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APPENDIX 1: Company Parent Feedback

This experience has meant the world to us and our daughter. She was delighted to have been part of the tour for two years and really grew in confidence working with students with physical and learning difficulties. Even though Lola is a well-proportioned dancer it was lovely to be in an environment where talent came first over size, shape and bone structure. She loved being cast in a key role. It was lovely to see her progress in both her dancing and acting. She loved being part of the company and felt responsible in setting a good example to the younger children.

Sue, parent of Lola



This is Ruby's second performance with LCB. We thoroughly enjoyed the experience so we were delighted when she was selected. Ruby loves to dance and enjoys her classes, the local ones and the associate classes at RBS and London Junior and Senior Ballet. Sadly, none of these classes allow them the chance to perform on stage. LCB has offered her the most amazing opportunity to perform on a West End stage at the tender age of just 11 and 12.

The fact that these weeks of rehearsals are offered free is quite simply incredible. I don't know if any other organisation that offers this. It renews her love to dance and she returned to her lessons with an even greater enthusiasm. For myself, I love the opportunity LCB gives me to share this experience with my daughter. I love helping backstage and seeing it all come together. I thank you all for making this happen and I'm happy to help in any way I can to ensure you can continue your great contribution to these young dancers' lives.

Elaine, parent of Ruby



For Lewis to have the opportunity to dance and train with other boys was amazing for his confidence. Being part of LCB has been like joining a family, I loved that he was encouraged and inspired by older members of the company. It was more than the fabulous performances, it was rehearsing with others who have a passion for dance and learning so much from the talented team.

Emma, parent of Lewis

LCB has been a magical experience for my daughter. She has always been a bit 'invisible' at school, never picked for school teams, never voted for class rep, however hard she tried, so to be chosen for this was a reward for all her past efforts I think! Her confidence has increased immeasurably, and to be in the company of other like-minded children was amazing. I think there's so much pressure on children with exams and tests, to do something that's not 'marked' or 'graded' is so refreshing too. I love the way the children supported and encouraged each other and championed and praised each other's dancing. LCB is a wonderful organisation, caring and committed and it's been an honour to be involved.

Company Parent 2018

APPENDIX 2: Ballet for £1 feedback**Feedback from schools:**

The pupils were impressed with the dance ability of the children as well as the experience of the ballet as a whole. It was inspiring for all children, especially the boys, to see others, just like them, achieving and working towards their goals.

Albion Primary School

They thoroughly enjoyed the ballet workshop, and although some were reluctant to do it at first, all children were engaged, participated and said they would like to do it again! Having live music (piano) during the workshop was real bonus and something that is never available to the children at school. All of the staff and LCB dancers were enthusiastic friendly to the children, which made the whole experience very pleasant. Thank you LCB for this fantastic opportunity!

Langford Primary School

This was an exceptional experience which served to inspire the creative sides of students who may never normally have been able to see such a unique production. Truly a 'London Experience' to match no other in terms of fusing together dance, art, music and theatre. To top it off hearing from ballet dancers before and after, and to do workshops at school elevated the experience to wonderful new heights for our pupils. Please keep this going! The children were very excited by the event they spoke about wanting to be in a show.

Vauxhall Primary

Feedback from charity group leaders and participants:

Some of our tenants have dementia and we were worried they may not enjoy it and be restless. We could not have been more wrong, they were enthralled from beginning to end as we were. On our way home, they talked non-stop about our wonderful experience. Some of our tenants as well as our staff, myself included, had NEVER attended a performance before and were converted. Even a few days later they were still talking to each other about the performance. For quite a few of us the ghost and his costume were firm favourites. They also spoke about the colours of the costumes as well as the music. It made us as staff very emotional to hear our Tenants so vocal and excited verbalising what they had seen and heard and their versions of what the story line was.

Hill Homes Group Leader

All our participants are over 65, mostly in their 70s and 80s, with the oldest 96. Some have long term chronic illnesses and others, including me, are recovering from cancer. The ballet helps take our minds off our illnesses, as well as enabling us to get out and see the beautiful dancing.

Friendship Club for Over 50s Group Leader

My group was so excited to see the LCB performance, for a few it was their first time. We travelled by train and the bus all 31 of us. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the performance and the meet and greet. 'Fantastic', 'Amazing', 'uplifting', 'beautiful costumes', 'I'm coming again next year' was a few of the comments. We absolutely loved our day at the ballet. Thank you for your help to combat Londoners in isolation- see you next year.

Kora Group Leader

APPENDIX 3: LCB Touring Companies feedback**Feedback from care home venues:**

LCB brought lots of happiness to our elderly, they enjoyed every minute and some of the responded really well. The relatives also enjoyed it and were looking forward to it. Our residents are still talking about it and how beneficial it was. One resident said "I feel like we have been out and attended the show at the opera".

Magnolia Court Care

The LCB Tour really was beautiful, one of our ladies is 104 years old and her smile was priceless! Thank you so much for visiting us, we hope you can visit again!

Hartfield House

It was excellent for residents to engage with a different age group with mixed nationalities, it presented them diversity and the opportunity to engage with the outside world. Dance and story telling aren't commonly integrated with our activity programme so it was meaningful and a welcome change for the residents in attendance.

St Wifrid's Care Home

Feedback from Special Educational Needs schools:

For us as a special needs school for children with severe and complex learning needs, it was an amazing opportunity for our children – one that they wouldn't normally get. To see them all sit down and watch for half an hour was special. LCB hasn't toured with our school before but to see the children engage the way they did was amazing. Our children's social opportunities can be limited so for them to have the experience was really beneficial. It was truly an unforgettable experience for staff and children. Also the dancers that took part were amazing and welcoming of our pupils. At the end they encouraged our pupils to take part and dance. To see how much the students enjoyed it was lovely. Something they have never experience before. We can't thank you enough!

Woodlands Special School

For some of our learners (and staff) this was the first ever ballet performance they have seen. As all of our learners have cognitive impairments/ learning difficulties, sometimes non-verbal art forms are more accessible for them to be part of or watch. The music, movement, and the props addresses convey the story really well and some of our learners understand it (or parts of it) and all of them really enjoy the performance. We hope to have you again next year! Thank you very much for coming.

Head Teacher, Jack Tizard School

For children in rehab for brain injury it was an opportunity to relax and enjoy a wonderful show put on by the LCB. They could practice skills in listening and attention. The children who may have done ballet before they received a brain injury would enjoy watching and a workshop or seeing the costumes. Chatting to the ballerinas may be beneficial to the children with speech impairments as it is practice of talking to unknown people.

The Children's Trust

Touring Company dancers and parents:

I loved the LCB tour so much as I made so many new friends and had so much fun. Performing was a great experience and I really enjoyed seeing the audience's faces light up when they saw us dance even if they didn't understand it! One of the best things was dancing with the children afterwards and seeing how much it meant to them. Throughout the tour I learnt to be more confident in myself and I really improved my dancing and acting ability.

Emily, Tour Dancer

Isaac had such a wonderful time on tour last week. On the way back to the station yesterday he said "wouldn't it be great if I could do that every day". It has been great for his dancing but also for his confidence, he has always enjoyed classes and performing in his own dance school but not been desperate to audition for anything else. Tour has changed that, he was talking about all the other dancers and the different classes they go to with an attitude of "could I try that". His favourite venue was going to the school for deaf children where he was really touched by their response to the performance. Please pass on our thanks to all who helped and made it possible for him to have this fantastic opportunity.

Gaynor, Parent of Issac