



LONDON CHILDREN'S BALLET

2015 ANNUAL REPORT





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1. 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 in a West End theatre each year by a company of talented young dancers, and by introducing new audiences to ballet through our outreach work. Our hugely 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, all of which spins out of content created through the production, enables us to engage with audiences that would never usually consider attending a ballet.

The 2015 production of *Snow White* was a huge success. 56 children were selected from competitive auditions to be part of LCB's main company, and a further 40 children were invited to join LCB's touring companies. *Snow White* was performed to full houses over eight performances at The Peacock Theatre from Thursday 23rd April to Sunday 26th April 2015. School-based workshops followed the

production, and touring companies brought an abridged version of the ballet into the community in June, July and September.

2. 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, 89% 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 2015 production of *Snow White* was first staged in 2009 and became one of LCB's most popular ballets with audiences. This year proved even more so, with tickets sold out eight weeks in advance and reports from the theatre that they could have sold out a second week of performances as well.

Although a revival, only the original music composed by Richard Norris and some of the original costumes remained the same. LCB is extremely economical with its production budget, and has a practice of making sure it re-uses as many costumes as possible from previous years. As a result, our total costume budget which includes roughly 120 costumes for the children is £9,000. The ballet was re-choreographed, with new sets and lighting by Ellan Parry and costumes designed by Sophie Cabot.

Jenna Lee, a former Soloist with English National Ballet, choreographed her first full length ballet for LCB's *Snow White*. She was joined by fellow English National Ballet Artist Amy Hollins, who took on the role of Ballet Mistress for *Snow White*. 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. Jenna, in an article for the LCB programme (enclosed), wrote: "I have tried to give the students a true representation of what it's like living, eating and breathing a new creation, as well as passing on the skills and knowledge I have gained after 12 years with English National Ballet."

Over 500 children aged between 9 and 15 auditioned for the 56 places in the 2015 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 23rd – 26th 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.

3. LCB2 Tours

As part of LCB's mission to introduce ballet to new audiences and develop our social impact, the LCB tours with an abridged version of its ballets to community venues. After the curtain went down on *Snow White*, the ballet was adapted to a format suitable for touring to small community spaces. Throughout the year, LCB sends four small touring companies to over 30 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 are residential care homes, hospices and schools for children with special needs. For each tour, about 15 dancers perform in full costume from the

West End production with the dancers each dancing up to three different roles to tell the story. A recording of the full orchestra is made at the Peacock Theatre and adapted to accompany the tour performances.

The LCB2 tours are also a way to extend the LCB experience to an additional 30 children who are not yet ready for the main 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.

For elderly people isolated in residential homes the tour gives a rare opportunity to see young children perform in a vibrant display of dance and 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 the children 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 (with many able to move their wheelchairs with great dexterity), try on the costumes and interact with the LCB dancers.

4. Ballet for £1 and Primary School Workshops

Fulfilling LCB's mission to bring ballet to new audiences, the charity gives away 25 per cent of tickets (two matinee performances) 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). 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 the LCB's two outreach matinees on £1 tickets, giving access to live theatre to people who would never usually be able to attend.

This year, LCB offered almost 2000 tickets priced at £1 to 16 schools and 50 charities for two matinee performances of *Snow White* on 23rd and 24th April.

5. Training: Ballet for Boys and LCB Summer School

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.

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 the beginning of January through to the end of March.

LCB also ran two weeks of summer school classes for girls, the first for 12 – 16 year olds and the second for 9-12 year olds. Both weeks were over-subscribed and there was a particular interest in the programme for older girls.

6. 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 2014, a large fundraising event was held at the Royal Hospital Chelsea in celebration of LCB's 20th Anniversary. Honorary Chairman, Darcey Bussell CBE and Principal Dancer with the Royal Ballet, Lauren Cuthbertson both attended. The Gala included an auction with over 50 donated lots and raised over £200,000.

Following the success of the Gala, Darcey Bussell accepted our invitation to be a Patron of LCB.

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

7. Conclusion

The creative fruits of the main production of *Snow White* – the choreography, the music and beautiful costumes have been used to great effect to further the work of LCB bring joy to new audiences in the theatre and in the community. Our thanks go to all our funders for enabling the work of LCB and helping us to deliver our mission to develop talent and inspire through dance.

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Appendix LCB Dancers Feedback

LCB means a whole lot to me, it has really made my happiness go up to the highest of skyscrapers. When I auditioned I just auditioned to have a go and see what happens, so when I got in and did the performances. LCB really helped me to open my eyes and see what else is out there.

Faith Moloney



LCB is one big gooey family, we watch out for each other and we're watched out for. Jenna and Amy have been amazing through this experience, treating us as true professionals. It is mutual respect and that's what I love so much about it. It's a professional company with a professional West End theatre, only the adults are all replaced by children who crave the feeling that performing gives you. LCB achieves that dream and for that I am forever grateful.

James Lovell



LCB has been a wonderful experience. This year was just as fantastic as when I did the Secret Garden tour. Everybody looks after you so well which encourages me to do my absolute best in every single rehearsal. I love working with different choreographers and Jenna and Amy have really helped bring out the softer side of my dancing and taught me to express myself even more as a tall dancer. It is an unforgettable experience and I wish I could do it again next year. I would recommend it to all young ballerinas! The people I have worked with are so inspiring. Thank you LCB!

Georgia Howlett



LCB is a special experience as well as inspiring and fun. Rehearsals are exciting as well as hard work, but when you are on stage you forget about all the hard work and just let yourself dance because you know the steps so well that you don't have to concentrate to smile..

Sofia Zaman

