

The Story Detectives 2022-23

Evaluation Report

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PHOTOS OF THE STORY DETECTIVES BY
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PERFORMERS
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Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Made By
**Katie
Green**



THE
**LIBRARY
PRESENTS**



Project Overview

From October 2022-July 2023 Made by Katie Green (MBKG) toured their flagship dance for libraries performance The Story Detectives (TSD) to 19 venues across the South East and South West of England, with 48 performances taking place at weekends and in school holidays, engaging 2448 audience members. The piece was aimed particularly at children aged 3-8 and their families.

The project delivered the 'Culture & Creativity' strand of the Universal Libraries Offer and worked with library partners to rebuild visitor confidence in a playful, reassuring way.

Relaxed performances and special support for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) – particularly those with autism or other autism spectrum conditions, and those who had social communication and social interaction challenges more generally – were of great benefit to, and increased engagement from this specific target audience.

Alongside their work in libraries, MBKG committed to developing their inclusive practice, through equality, diversity and inclusion training and also exploring their environmental responsibility, including benchmarking their environmental impact through touring.



BAM



About The Story Detectives

The Story Detectives is a highly interactive performance, integrating dance, story-telling and music. Two characters, Particular and Playful, invite the audience on an imaginative journey around their local library, travelling through different kinds of books and collecting clues that help them find the name of The Most Important Story.

The piece was created by Made by Katie Green in 2019 at Guildford Library, with and for children aged 6+. It was originally commissioned by **Delight Charity** as part of their **Delight in Dance programme** for primary schools across Surrey and Croydon, and has toured widely to schools and libraries since 2019. The 2022/23 library tour represents the first time it has been shared with a general public audience.

TSD has been adapted so that it can be performed flexibly and site-responsively in different libraries, where the performance takes place in various locations and draws the audience through the library, following the action.

The performances also include fun dance workshops for children in the library, and from 2022-23, 2000 Activity Trail packs were distributed to further engage the children with creative tasks around the hero/villain themes contained within the piece.

You can watch the trailer for The Story Detectives by Dan Martin, filmed at Devonport Library in Plymouth **HERE**.



Please watch our trailer for The Story Detectives by Dan Martin, filmed at Devonport Library in Plymouth **HERE**



Project Aims and Objectives

1

To increase the number and depth of relationships with libraries, building potential for future collaboration

- a. To establish new relationships with libraries in the South East and South West
- b. To create a best practice checklist of how dance and libraries can collaborate successfully
- c. To increase understanding of how dance can be used as an interpretative and engagement tool in non-traditional performance spaces

2

To increase accessibility to dance, introducing new audiences to dance in each locality.

- a. To develop new ways of engaging audiences
- b. To access an audience that is new to dance
- c. To deliver a socially engaged bespoke performance work informed by the audience

3

To inspire and ignite children's creativity

- a. To present a high quality professional dance performance in spaces where children will be more likely to see it
- b. To capture children's attention and sustain engagement with the performance and activities
- c. To inspire children, bringing happiness and creative curiosity



4

To develop MBKG skills and knowledge; training a team in the best practice

- a. To rigorously review practice and learning throughout the project's lifetime
- b. To review and update EDI policy and practice
- c. To develop an Environmental Responsibility policy and collect data to establish benchmarks for touring
- d. To develop team knowledge and skills

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation framework for the project (developed by Clearcut) used a Strategy Tree Logic Model and associated methodology matrix to ensure the qualitative and quantitative audience and partner data being collected would seek to evidence the desired aims and objectives of the project, and to capture any unexpected outcomes. Data was collected through audience surveys (for parents to complete), fun activities with the children, library partner surveys and discussions, and reflective learning by Katie Green and her creative team throughout the project.

There were 284 respondents* to audience surveys across 17 libraries, where Cambourne Library used their own evaluation form and audiences at Devonport Library weren't surveyed in the same way because they came from 2 local primary schools. Children's responses were captured creatively through inviting them to draw their favourite moments from the show or to design their own hero/villain characters as a way to get them chatting about the piece. This also gave their grown-ups time to complete the survey while the children were focused.

It was noticed that parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) were sometimes less able to complete the surveys, so it can be assumed that the data for number of attendees with SEN is lower than what was actually achieved. However, valuable information and quotes from many of those parents were collected through post-show conversations with company members.

Follow up feedback was gathered through 1-2-1 and group discussions with library staff and others involved in programming the events.

The Data Headlines

No. of libraries	19
No. of new library relationships for MBKG	18
No. of live dance performances	48
No. of workshops	47
No. of live audience attenders at performances	1858
No. of incidental audiences watching rehearsals	590
TOTAL LIVE AUDIENCES	2448
TOTAL WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS	1054
AUDIENCE INSIGHTS from survey respondents*	
% who had not seen or rarely seen live dance before	79%
% first time attendees at the library	14%
% gave the show 4 or 5 out of 5 for enjoyment	98%
% who were attending the library because of our performances (including new and regular library attendees)	85%
% who scored the performance 4 or 5 out of 5 when asked how much their children were engaged in the show.	95%
% that would recommend The Story Detectives to other families	100%
% of audience that would definitely attend the library again because a performance was taking place	96%
Take up of Activity packs	2000
Digital engagement – number of scans of dynamic QR codes linked to Activity Pack videos	730
Digital engagement – No. of attendees at online advocacy event	50
Digital reach across Made By Katie Green platforms	36,023
Estimated digital reach across all other partners linked with the project	63,263
TOTAL DIGITAL REACH	99,286

The Audience

DEMOGRAPHICS

Working in libraries enabled MBKG to attract a diverse audience (age/ethnicity/SEN), who were mainly local people attending with their children.

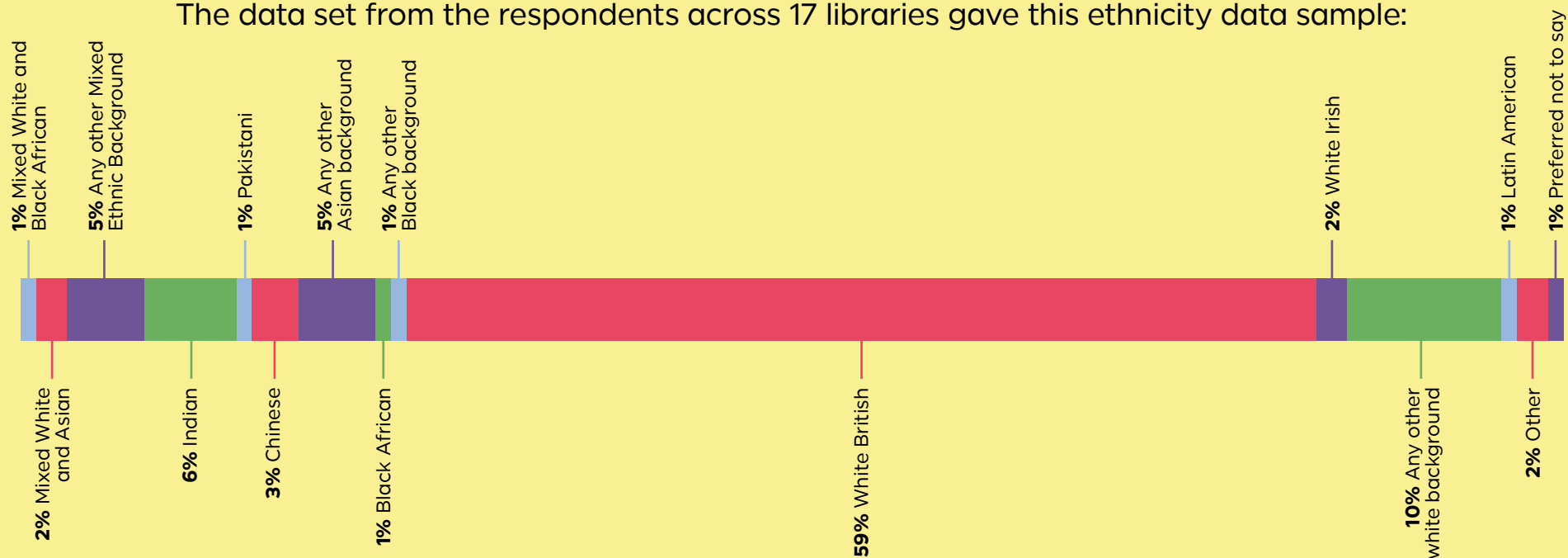
99% of respondents attended the performance with children. Of those children:

3% were aged under 2 years
30% were aged between 2-4 years
49% were aged between 5-7 years
16% were aged between 8-10 years
2% were aged 10+

The event was promoted particularly at 3-8 year olds, and the data evidences that this target group made up the highest proportion of the audience. 8% of respondents said their children had SEN, and feedback indicated ways in which The Story Detectives was particularly engaging for these children – see **Evaluating Impact – Inclusion** below on p.11 for detail.

TSD Sample Ethnicity Data across 17 libraries

It was noted that the ethnicity of the audience was hugely more diverse in Hillingdon, considerably less diverse in Plymouth and Dorset, similar to national representative statistics. The data set from the respondents across 17 libraries gave this ethnicity data sample:



MOTIVATIONS

New to the library

14%

of audiences were new to the library and attending specifically because of the performance. This evidence shows that dance performance can be used to attract new visitors to the library.

31%

described themselves as regular library attenders visiting once a week or fortnight.

85%

of attenders (new and previous) said they attended the library specifically that day, due to the performance...

...and **9%**

were incidental audiences – they were not aware of the performance but decided to stay longer in the library as a result of it.

New to dance

Some people reflected that they had only seen performances in a theatre before and were keen to see more dance in their library again.

79%

of audiences had never or rarely seen live dance, which evidenced the strategy to engage new audiences for dance was successful.

“Excellent to see it in ‘their’ space rather than a stage. Made it more personal and interactive.”

AUDIENCE MEMBER

“That was a nice thing we unexpectedly came along and slotted ourselves into!”

AUDIENCE MEMBER

“I came by chance but my 2 little girls and I loved it so much!”

AUDIENCE MEMBER

“Didn’t know about it but a very happy surprise!”

AUDIENCE MEMBER



MOTIVATIONS

Repeat attendance

Qualitative data also showed that people enjoyed it so much they were repeat attenders.

100% said they would recommend the performance to other families

95% said they were more likely to attend a performance event again at the library as a result of seeing the show

“There were a high number of families in Walton Library coming back having seen the performance already, including 1 from Woking, 1 from Ashford, and a family with 2 girls who had seen the performance at Walton Oak school for example.”

KATIE GREEN

“We saw lots of evidence of cross-over between libraries – people who had been to Godalming and come again for example”

SURREY LIBRARY STAFF

“He saw this before at Ashford Library & liked it so much we came to Walton Library”

AUDIENCE MEMBER

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

77% of respondents travelled less than 5 miles to watch TSD across the whole tour, however due to the range of areas we visited, this varied considerably from urban to less urban areas in different communities.

Data indicates hyper-local audiences, even more so in urban areas such as Hillingdon where the data shows the average distance travelled was 2.4 miles.

8% travelled by public transport

57% travelled by car

35% walked or travelled by bicycle

“Although many people were delighted to have this offer right on their doorstep, there were also instances where people travelled away from their usual local library to watch The Story Detectives.”

KATIE GREEN

“we usually attend libraries in Weymouth or Puddletown but came to Dorchester today especially for the performance”

AUDIENCE MEMBER, DORCHESTER

“I think that the Story Detectives went down really well at Central Library – it brought in families that I know live in other parts of the city (e.g. I recognised some from Efford and Tothill)”

LIBRARY STAFF MEMBER, PLYMOUTH

Evaluating Impact

The evaluation data, alongside feedback from Katie Green has enabled the key findings about the impact of The Story Detectives tour in libraries to be grouped into four key themes:

ENGAGEMENT

CREATIVITY

INCLUSION

CONFIDENCE

These impacts can translate into reasons for libraries to programme dance, and specifically the type of dance and approach that MBKG adopts, which has been evolved into a **Top Tips document** for sharing the learning about what made this project a success, now available [HERE](#).



Katie Green additionally shared her experience of TSD with 50 online attendees at **MBKG's Dance in Libraries Advocacy Event** in October 2023 (recording available [HERE](#)), sharing the findings from The Story Detectives tour. This was attended primarily by professionals from the library sector, drawing interest from across the UK and also from one attender in the US.

Why The Story Detectives works in a library context

Audience feedback indicates the features of MBKG's approach in TSD that proved particularly effective for library contexts included:

- making the piece inviting; drawing the audience in gently, on their own terms so they could have time to acclimatise and to feel comfortable getting involved
- mixing together different ways of telling the story through text, music and movement
- moving around the library to keep the children engaged and focused, even over a longer period of time
- connecting the piece to things the children would recognise, so that they could be empowered by knowing the answer to questions being asked of them (e.g. mixing in a few well-known references from fairytales, or well-loved books such as The Gruffalo)
- working with experienced performers who were highly-skilled at integrating all the children's suggestions and creating a lively, funny, warm environment

Key findings and the evidence from the evaluation support each theme as follows...

ENGAGEMENT

Dance performance increases engagement with and enrichment through libraries.

Evidence shows that:

- audiences attended the library
- made repeat visits
- and stayed longer than they intended in the library

because of the performance.

The Story Detectives impacted positively on the audience's enjoyment and experience of the library and the world of books/story-telling. The result was that children were inspired and excited to engage with live dance/a fun activity in the library, even where this was their first experience of this kind.

Parent comments:

"The children loved every single bit of the performance done today. Hope there are more performances like these that makes kids happier"

"It kept two active 5 year olds completely enthralled. Fantastic, performers were so engaging with all the children and created a lively, warm environment"

"This was her first experience and she was completely engrossed and excited."

95% scored their children's engagement with the performance 4 or 5 out of 5

"They were completely absorbed and the wonder in their eyes was so incredible to see. Thank you so much!"

94% of respondents said they definitely saw an increase in their children's engagement during the show

The feedback from libraries across the tour was resolutely positive and the performance brought something new to the library that was magical and transformative.

"Thank you so much for coming, it was such a fantastic performance, the audience were mesmerised, it was just lovely to see!"

"I would 100% have more events like this in libraries."

"The atmosphere in Devonport was spellbinding and brought the library space to life. The children responded so positively to the sounds and movement from the start of the performance. This was unlike anything they would have experienced in their visits (and probably in a dance performance) before. They were completely engaged throughout the session and really involved in playing an active part, emerging as Story Detectives themselves though the most important story. The teaching staff were very impressed by the session, which was richly learning based but extremely fun and enjoyable."



INCLUSION

Inclusive dance performance can support children and young people with SEN.

Children with SEN, particularly those with autism or an autism spectrum condition, or who find social communication and social interaction challenging have responded well to The Story Detectives. The piece was designed with a range of access strategies in place such as clearly defined expectations embedded within the piece, a Social Story film available in advance and on the day, a 'Chill Out Area' available in the library during performances and an alternate version of the Activity Pack available that gave more freedom for children to design their own responses rather than following a predetermined trail around the library.

MBKG received positive feedback from many families about the particular strategies they employed as part of their approach to creating TSD, and found that being clear in advance about what people could expect from the performance made the experience more enjoyable for everyone, not only those children with SEN and their families.

"My children are autistic, so I found this performance BRILLIANT for them – thank you! Kids looked engaged throughout and it was a brilliant interactive way to spark interest and creativity."

Parent comments:

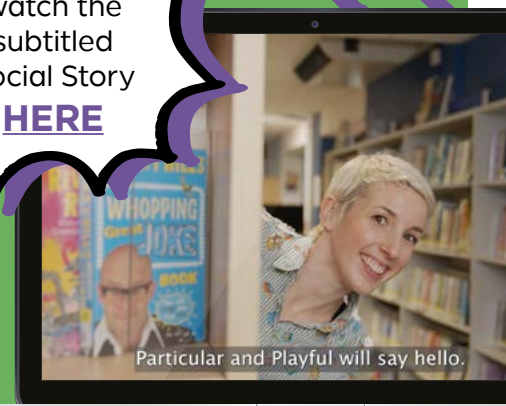
"Speaking as a parent, your quiet table was perfect. My son liked having a quiet space to go to and it helped him understand things a bit better when he read through your folder. It was well worded and made him feel OK about dipping in and out. He was also impressed with your box of fidget toys! As a parent of a child who will often want to stand back or leave, I found today's event really accommodating. Sometimes I have found it hard or felt awkward when my son chooses to sit out or dip in and out of something. The 3 of you made a happy environment for us to do this without any awkwardness of us feeling like we were interrupting or being disruptive. A massive thank you for that."

Library comments:

"Children were really building in confidence. One parent said her child didn't officially have SEN but found over-stimulation difficult. She said The Story Detectives really drew her out of herself and by the end she was giving good suggestions to the characters and wore a bib. She told me about the fact she was writing her own story at home called Daisy Dog."

"One parent commented about the fact the Social Story was a really helpful tool for their children; he loved having the fidget toys available."

You can watch the subtitled Social Story [HERE](#)



CREATIVITY

Children developed creativity and explored their love of reading/stories.

TSD data clearly evidenced audience members' enjoyment and fun, but parents also described their children's engagement with particular themes of the piece, such as different styles of books, characters, and the way in which the Story Detectives made a game out of collecting letters, building words and joining those together.

This core storytelling theme linked closely with all partner libraries' (and the **Reading Agency's**) objectives of empowering children and transforming all lives through encouraging a love of stories and reading.

Parent comments:

"Such a great concept. A really fun way to engross the children in letters, stories and the library!"

"Great learning opportunities and engagement in the arts from a young age through stories."

"Such a fun and engaging dance performance, with a smattering of learning amongst stories of superheroes and villains."

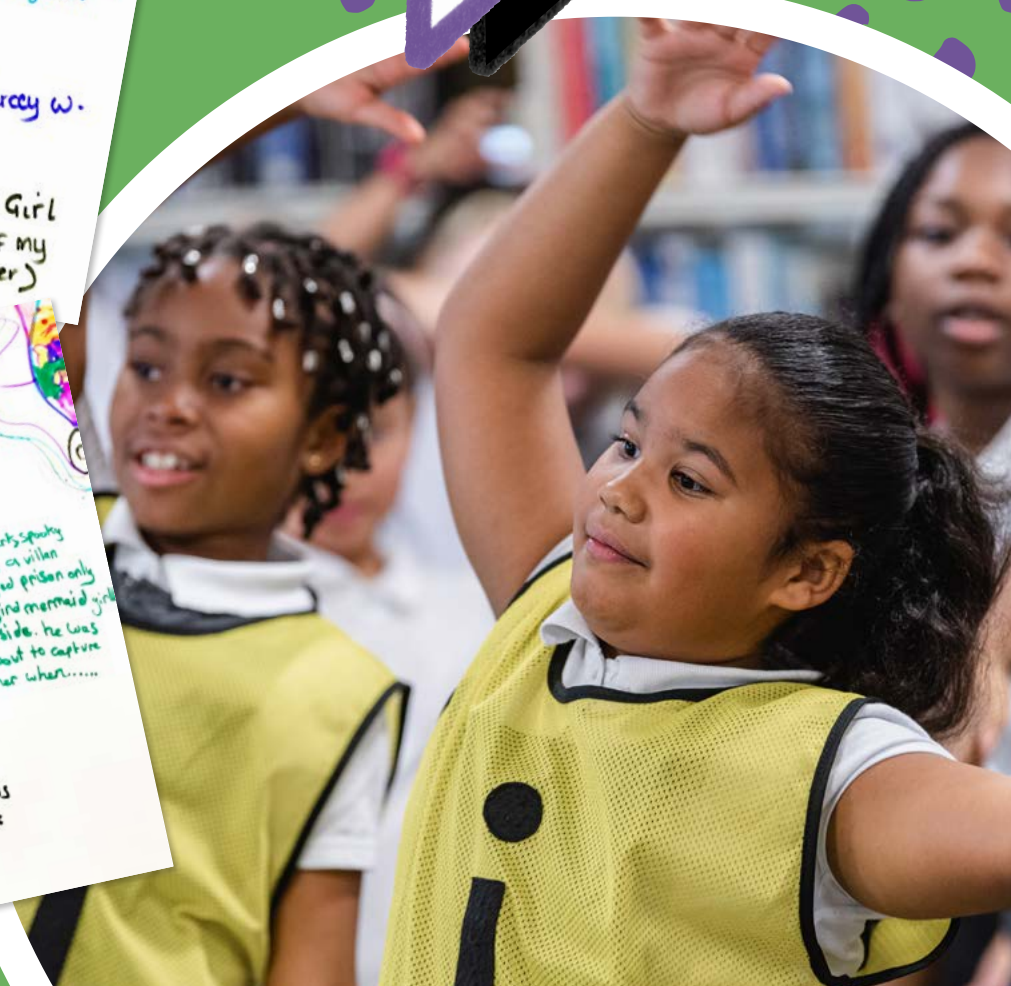
"I wish these sort of activities were a weekly event so that footfall in libraries increases and the desire and interest in reading is nurtured with the young folk."

"It was perfect for my 5 year old son who loves stories and is just learning to read."



"It would be wonderful to see more events like this which are strongly linked to our library values, a love of books and reading and empowering children in their own writing journey."

PLYMOUTH LIBRARY STAFF



CONFIDENCE

Children built confidence and self-esteem, with those less likely to engage at the beginning coming out of their shell by the end.

Children clearly developed both their ability to engage and concentrate, but also gained confidence as the performance progressed.

Parent comments:

“My child was engaged from the beginning. The audience participation helped loads and giving contributions helped build confidence and interactivity.”

“I enjoyed seeing their faces, and how engaged they were. Even my shy children opened up.”



“My daughter loved it, and clearly grew in confidence throughout”

“I didn't know this was taking place and happened to visit the library by chance as it was beginning. At first my daughter did not participate as she was shy but before long she had joined in and volunteered her ideas.”

“It was fun, engaging and very good for kids' mental health as I believe it's face to face interaction for kids that is important”



MBKG aimed to use TSD to elevate the company's knowledge, experience and skills on Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Environmental Responsibility.

Developing MBKG

As an organisation, MBKG believe it is important to:

- continually find out ways of creating the best possible work, which can reach/is accessible to all kinds of people
- share what they are learning/feed into a dialogue about best practice as part of nurturing a 'culture of collaboration', in which it's more possible for dance artists and organisations to work with all kinds of community spaces and places.

As part of The Story Detectives project on this occasion, this meant reviewing EDI across the company activities, with a view to finding ways of creating access to the work for the greatest number/range of people.

MBKG also invested in understanding more about the environmental sustainability of their practice, including beginning to establish a better understanding of:

- the environmental impact of:
 - audiences engaging with the work in libraries, some of which is outlined in the **Travel and Transport** section on p.8 above
 - and MBKG's touring practice e.g. the company used Julie's Bicycle's Creative Green tools to calculate the carbon footprint of the TSD tour, which on this occasion was 1 tonne
- the key role MBKG could play – as a small company with access to a captive audience in community spaces such as libraries and schools – in advocating for environmental responsibility; making more people aware of the world around them and the impact we all have on the environment; and in encouraging people to talk and think about what they could do to make a difference.

The company produced a MBKG EDI Policy and Action Plan and Environmental Policy and Action Plan, and began to deliver on the following recommendations from these plans during touring of TSD:

- **new strategies in place to make their work more inclusive**, such as the Social Story Film, upon which MBKG will build in the future
- **a better understanding of the environmental themes and ideas that are most important to audiences**, which MBKG are now using to create a new work (provisionally called Seed), developing children's understanding of the world around them and their potential to do small positive things to create change.

Developing dance in libraries

Katie Green, as an independent artist, offers considerable value to the dance and library sectors through her effective sharing of insight of her company's work in libraries, and striving to evidence the impact of dance in libraries beyond her own company's ambitions.

This mirrors her work with dance and museums/heritage sites over the last 10 years through **The Imagination Museum**, where as a result of MBKG's projects, Katie is able as an individual artist to support sector knowledge and skills development due to her commitment to sharing the findings of evaluation, creating and publishing advocacy events and generally supporting understanding of the benefits of dance in different contexts and the ways in which it can be used as an interpretative and engagement tool.



Katie Green's reflections:

“MBKG's experience touring The Story Detectives from 2022-23, also informed by our touring to primary schools through the Delight in Dance programme for 3 years prior to that, has shown that dance can have an important place as part of libraries' extended cultural offer for families. It brings dynamism and excitement, a new way of looking at familiar ideas and showing that library spaces can embrace their increasingly multi-purpose roles in communities and be a welcoming place for everyone to come together and get involved in creative activity.

When it was originally made, The Story Detectives was inspired by the idea of reawakening the magic of the library and of stories for children who were less likely to visit, to enjoy reading or to have books at home. With this ambition at its core, and, importantly, having evolved gradually over 3 years of testing the piece with members of the target audience, The Story Detectives performance is now particularly well-suited to the library context, and to engaging young audiences.”

Katie shared the findings of the evaluation of TSD with an online audience of 50 library staff in October 2023, which was recorded and shared online [here](#) alongside MBKG's **list of Top Tips** for working with dance and libraries. These resources, alongside this evaluation report, can be used to support libraries to make the case for the benefits of dance projects like TSD in libraries longer term.

Credits

The Story Detectives is a Delight Charity commission created by Made By Katie Green. It was funded from 2022-23 by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, Surrey Libraries, The Library Presents, Hillingdon Libraries, Plymouth Libraries and Dorset Council Libraries and has also been supported by the Touring Arts in Libraries (TAIL) project as part of the National Rural Touring Forum.

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WHAM

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