

Leonardo Project – Open Out Arts

Case study of Theatre Bristol local activity: Social media seminar for local and International artists, 25th April 2013

Activity objective: Developing promotional skills and the use of technology

Theatre Bristol sent an open invitation to South West based artists working within outdoor arts to attend a seminar about the use of social media in their work.

The seminar was also attended by International artists who had been brought to Bristol with Le Forneau, and Laurie Miller-Zutshi from SeaChange Arts.

Theatre Bristol invited representatives from 3 Bristol-based companies to speak who are seen as being at the forefront of integrating social media in their work. These were Matthew Austin from MAYK (which includes Mayfest - festival of contemporary theatre), Desperate Men (outdoor arts company of 30 years standing), and Matthew Whittle, co-director of the Wardrobe Ensemble and formally of Farrows Creative (marketing agency for the arts).

The speakers provided a comprehensive guide to using social media to create an audience following for artists, companies and festivals. The emphasis was on developing relationships which in turn may lead to increased sales and on how to use social media creatively not only for creating a network but for enhancing the artistic offer to audiences.

Desperate Men provided a case study of how they set up 'Outside Online', a 3 hour live forum for outdoor artists using Facebook. This opened up the subject of better communication between companies involved in Outdoor Arts, particularly during the winter months when there is less performance work.

Participants at the seminar reported that the session from Desperate Men was the most relevant to their work. Matthew Austin and Matthew Whittle covered much of the same ground and some of their advice was pertinent to all art forms and all marketing activity rather than specific to outdoor arts. Some of the artists in attendance felt that they already knew how to use social media to promote their work but Theatre Bristol reported that there is still room for improvement. Emerging artists were more receptive to the seminar than established artists.

There were opportunities for questions from artists in attendance regarding more specific areas of interest. The event was hosted by Simon Day, Artists Support Producer at Theatre Bristol.