

The Snow Child goes out to the kids

In November 2015 the Foundation made a grant of £3500 to help fund the production of *The Snow Child* by Butterfly Psyche Theatre. We were particularly impressed by the theatre's focus on making live performances a reality for disabled children. Now that the production run has finished, our guest blogger, Alison Farina, Artistic Director at Butterfly Psyche Theatre, shares with us how successful this ambitious project has been.

"Butterfly Psyche Theatre is a professional, small-scale producing and touring theatre company based in Bath, Somerset. We believe that through theatre difficult issues can be explored, experienced and addressed in a safe environment promoting positive mental health and well-being. It's really important that our work is socially conscious, relevant and our atmosphere is warm and welcoming.

We created *The Snow Child*, which is a multi-sensory, interactive theatre production to reach out to as many theatregoers with complex needs as possible. The production worked hard at reducing those barriers preventing families with Moderate (MLD), Severe Learning (SLD), Profound and Multiple (PMLD) difficulties and autistic children from attending theatres and making everyone feel comfortable, welcome and considered. Taking account of the needs of these children made a huge change to the fraught and anxiety-provoking nightmare a normal theatre outing can cause for families with complex needs.



You can read about the particular techniques and approaches we used at Butterfly Psyche Theatre.

We also provided free workshops in a number of Schools and were able to provide private

performances of *The Snow Child* to all the students at the SEN-integrated Trinity Academy in Radstock.

Here is some of the feedback we received from families with learning disabilities:

- *"It can be very isolating when there are so many places we just cannot take my son and so many events we cannot do. It is hard to say just how grateful we are to find something like this! Thank you all so much for a wonderful show and your sensitivity."*



- *"'The Snow Child experience' taught many, many good things to my son. For me as a parent of Special Needs, to have met such a lovely theatre and what they offer to our children and community is so important. Thank you so much!"*



- *"Our youngest daughter is in a wheelchair and has special needs. We were fine in the front row. The wheelchair seats were already booked at the relaxed performance but we felt comfortable at the main stream show."*

- *"My boy has autism. Everything was outstanding!"*
- *"We needed wheelchair access for my daughter and we found that the Rondo Theatre was excellent for this. Very easy to get into and perfect place to store wheelchair."*
- *"With inattentiveness and a tendency to fidget normal shows are a no go but the atmosphere was amazing and the show so entrancing they all had a wonderful time."*



caption - The Snow Child soft Break-out Space at The Rondo theatre - funded in part by the Parry Family Charitable Foundation

We are hugely grateful to the *Parry Family Charitable Foundation* for helping to bring live performances of *The Snow Child* to many disabled children a reality. Without the help of charities like the *Parry Family Charitable Foundation* this ambitious production would not have happened."

Photos by ©OwenBensonVisuals2015

